

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL



December 1951

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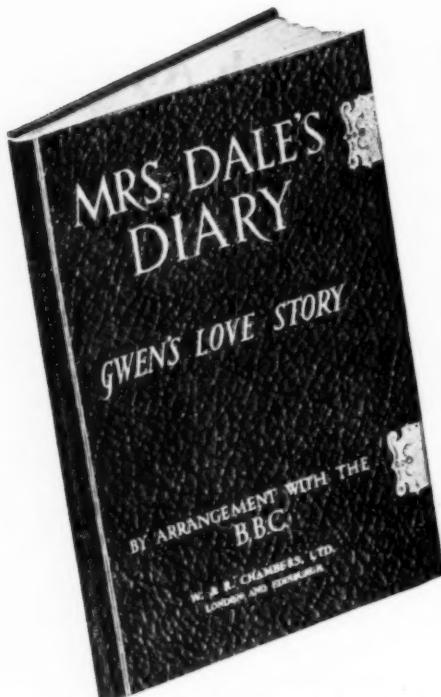
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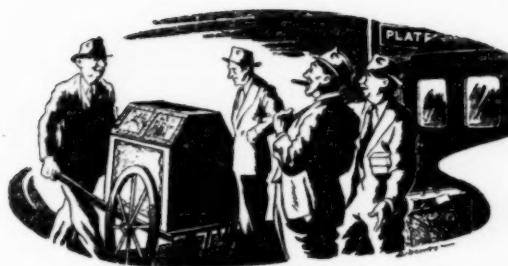
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# The Means of Production

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## MAURICE WILTSHIRE

YOU'VE heard all about Welsh people and them being great for singing and music of all kinds. Well, our village, that's called Pontymochan, is the greatest place for music for its size in the whole country. Every single man, woman, and child sings. And the ones that don't sing play a musical instrument of some kind or other. And the ones that can't do either whistle like nightingales.

You can walk along the village street, winding up from the valley to the mountain-top, on a Friday night and no matter where you look you will hear music. Starting at the bottom by Pritchard Milk, you'll see Owen Roberts, the senior partner, blowing his cornet by the open window, practising 'Carnival at Venice,' his favourite for thirty years, and fine it sounds. And about the middle, past Evan the Post, you'll hear Evan himself in his cottage singing away at the tenor bits from Handel's *Messiah*. A great favourite he is in the chapel rooms at Christmas with the whole choir going it like stink and Evan

bawling away at the top of his lungs, loud and wonderful. Oh, wonderful musical we are.

This being the case, then, you'll be surprised to hear about Ianto the Motors, who runs the garage at the bottom by there, and him not being able to tell one note of music from another. Aye, strange it is. No understanding a man like that, there isn't. But then he's not one of us, like. He come from Newport years ago when they put in the new valley road connecting up with the metal works.

Clever he was. With his crafty mechanical knowledge he soon made a packet of money, doing up the cars and lorries coming through from the works. Soon he had so much work he couldn't do it all himself. So he got his son, Little Ianto, to help him, and him only twelve years old. What a little laddie like that could do with those great big lorries, I don't know, but they say Little Ianto knows as much about motors as his dad. And another thing they say, too. They reckon Ianto sends Little Ianto into the road with tacks

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and broken glass to sort of help business when the lorries come by. But this is slander, I think even against Ianto; everyone in Pontymochan knows that, with all his faults, Ianto is man enough to do it himself. No, what we really have against him is his meanness and not being able to appreciate music. Little Ianto is the same, not only about music, but in every respect.

Well, I expect you're wondering where all this is leading, so I'll tell you. It explains why the Pontymochan Traders' Association decided to buy a barrel-organ and why Ianto said he'd resign if they did.

IT happened at the meeting we had some time before Christmas. There wasn't a lot of us there, because we were all in the choir rehearsing the *Messiah*, but we had a good quorum, with Owen Roberts in the chair, and Ianto was there too.

'It has been suggested to me,' says Owen, banging on the table with his hammer, because most of us were still humming over our chorus parts, 'that we should do something to raise money for a children's treat. Has anyone got any ideas, because, if they haven't, I've got one, and it's that we should dip into the kitty and buy a barrel-organ to take round the streets, by here, collecting.'

Now this was an astonishing fine idea. It was musical, and therefore fitting to Pontymochan. In fact, seeing it came from Owen, it was the only idea we would be discussing that night, and most of us wanted to get back to the chapel rooms for the practice, so we said how fine it was.

'All in favour, then,' says Owen Roberts, brisk and business-like.

'No.' We all turned our heads in shocked surprise. It was Ianto.

'I reckon it's a proper daft idea, mun,' he says. 'Beggin', it'll be. Beggin' in the streets. Lower the tone of the whole place, it will.' And he glares all gloomy and sour-like at Owen Roberts.

'Lower the tone be damned, Mister Jones,' says Owen, looking dangerous, but keeping his temper. 'Remember young Lyn Morgan, then? Didn't he walk all the way to London in the depression and sing in the streets by there? And didn't a theatrical hear him and put him on the wireless? Making more money he is than you'll ever do with motors, mun!'

But Ianto stuck to his guns. 'Singin' is

different to barrel-organs,' he growls, though I don't know how he could tell the difference, himself. 'I don't reckon, Mister Chairman, mun, you'll get a theatrical comin' down from London to listen to a barrel-organ and puttin' it on the wireless.'

'But this is for charity, mun,' says Evan the Post.

'Then,' says Ianto, 'why don't the choir go round and do a bit of singin' instead. Save trouble and expense and it'll be the same as a barrel-organ and we'll have twenty monkeys instead of one.'

Well, that did it, like. Owen Roberts, though only one of the baritones, was cut to the very soul of him. 'Mister Jones,' he says, loud and threatening, 'you're out of bloody order.'

'In or out,' says Ianto, impenitent, 'if you buy that barrel-organ I'll resign from the association.'

Crisis, it was. Though Ianto was unpopular, he was highly respected and very influential in the business life of Pontymochan by reason of him having a lot of money. We didn't really want to lose him. Evan the Post, a very gentle fellow despite his big voice, held out an olive-branch. 'Let's not be 'asty, Ianto boy,' he says, smiling sweet and sticky. 'I reckon, as the finest business brain in the town, you should see the value of Owen's idea. A barrel-organ is a means of production. It is a capital investment. The choir might lose their voices or catch measles. But a barrel-organ, which is mechanical—why, look you, the human element is ruled out altogether.'

At the mention of mechanicals, Ianto's face cleared. 'Well,' he mumbles, looking down at his agenda, 'reckon I did speak a bit inconsidered. If it's the will of the majority, and it won't cost much, I'll not be standin' in the road, then. In fact, if you get one, I'll be standin' on a mountain-top a hundred miles off. But seein' it's for charity, I'd like to set a good example and put a pound towards what we've aye in the kitty.'

We all thought this was going a bit far the other way because it sort of committed us to do the same. But Owen rushes on with the details, giving Ianto a brief vote of thanks, which he proposes and seconds himself.

So it was arranged that Owen, Evan the Post, and me should form into a Barrel-Organ Committee, with power to co-opt Ianto if any expert mechanical advice was

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needed. And we had power to spend up to fifteen pounds, which made Ianto wince a little, but he didn't say anything.

**N**OW, that's when the first trouble started. We soon found there wasn't a barrel-organ to be had for love nor money for seventy miles around.

'There's nothing for it, boys,' says Owen. 'We'll have to write to Cardiff.'

Evan had a brother in Cardiff, so he wrote him a letter asking him to find us a barrel-organ, and Evan, being the Post, had it sent special rates to save money for the charity. Several days passed, and then one night Evan burst in late to choir-practice holding a letter from his brother and looking proper down in the mouth. 'It's no good, boys,' he says. 'My brother says there isn't a damn barrel-organ in the whole of the country excluding the North, which hasn't got one either.'

So we went into committee.

'London,' says Owen. 'That's the only place you'll get anything these days. I was afraid we might have to go up there, but I didn't like to mention it before.'

'London it will have to be, then,' says Evan. 'But I don't know why you should be so reluctant about it.'

Owen gazes into space for a minute; then his eyes take on a kind of peculiar light. 'I've never been there, boys, and I hear it's a proper wicked place, full of temptations and that.'

'Don't be daft, mun,' says Evan. 'London's all right.'

'So you know all about London, then, Evan,' snaps Owen. 'Have you been there?'

'No,' Evan says, 'but I had an auntie who went up with the Cardiff rugby fifteen once.'

'And what happened to her, then?'

'Nothing at all,' says Evan.

'Evan,' says Owen, patting his shoulder, 'how old were you when your auntie went to London?'

'Six, I reckon,' says Evan.

'Well, cor damn, mun,' says Owen. 'You don't think your auntie's going to tell you things like that when you're only six, do you?'

Evan was silent. Horrifying, it sounded. But there was nothing we could do but put a bold face on it and brave whatever lay before us.

When Ianto heard about it he was all for resigning again and taking his pound back.

Gallivanting in the flesh-pots he called it. So we co-opted him on to the committee, turned the whole thing into a delegation, and a couple of days later the four of us were sitting in a third-class carriage bound for the metropolis with beating hearts.

**O**WEN, who wanted to fight temptation on its own ground, wanted to stay at a posh hotel, but Ianto said he'd go back and tell them all in Pontymochan he was squandering the association's funds. So, instead, we found a boarding-house in a big road a couple of streets away from Paddington station—Sussex Gardens, I think they call it up there.

'Now,' says Owen, when we'd unpacked and hung our other suits over the backs of the chairs in our bedrooms, 'now we'll get on about this barrel-organ business.'

'Where shall we start, then?' asks Evan.

'Well, obvious it is,' says Owen. 'There are four of us here and there's four points to the compass. We've got a few hours, so I reckon we'll go out and start lookin'. No taxis and no talkin' to anyone, except about a barrel-organ.'

So off we went—Ianto to the north, Evan to the south, Owen, looking very anxious, to the east, and me to the west.

Soon I found myself walking down a big road with a park on one side and a lot of big houses on the other and a great confusion of mechanical vehicles running up and down the middle and red and green lights flashing on and off, very graceful and pretty.

Of course, I didn't have any idea how to start, see. I tried a couple of music-shops, but I couldn't make them understand I wanted a barrel-organ. So I just kept on walking towards the west, thinking hard the whole time. Suddenly I heard the sound of music coming from a small side-street. My heart gave a great bound of joy. It was barrel-organ music.

There were two fellows there. One turning the handle and another banging himself all over with a couple of spoons in rhythm to the tune. I told the man turning the handle I was from Pontymochan, looking for a barrel-organ like the one he had. He stops turning and looks at me sort of hard, like. Then he says to his mate: 'Shall we give it him, Charlie?' And Charlie says something about letting me have the bloody pitch too, for all

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it's worth. I reckoned this was very kind of them, but I said I didn't want it as a gift, because the association was willing to pay fifteen pounds.

'Barrel-organs is up,' he says. 'Ten thousand pounds I'll take for this one, and I'm not makin' a penny on it.'

I couldn't believe my ears. 'Why, boy,' I says, flabbergasted, 'there isn't that much money in the whole of Pontymochan, Ianto the Motors included.'

'Wait till you win a football pool, then,' he says, and, picking up the shafts, trundles the organ off down the street, with Charlie trotting alongside, busting hisself laughing.

I HAD to ask three policemen before I found the boarding-house again. None of the others was in, which was a good sign, because one of them must have found something. I waited patiently for them to come back. Ianto was first. But he hadn't got as near to a barrel-organ as I had. He'd gone to an amusement arcade and one of the fellows there was having trouble with a slot-machine, so Ianto spent the night helping him mend it.

Owen Roberts didn't have any luck, either. We thought he had when he came in, because his eyes were shining, sort of as though satisfied with a great achievement. But he says: 'I was too busy rescuing a party in distress. I met a girl from Swansea who'd been knocked over by a motor—terrible for motors this town. She took me to a place where I could buy her some brandy to pull her round, and when we got there she changed her mind and said she'd have gin, which is better for shock. She must have been badly shook up because she needed a tremendous amount of gin. Even then she was still unsteady when she tried to walk, so I suggested I should take her home. She thanked me and went off to put powder on her nose. But she was gone so long I thought she must have fainted. So I asked a porter chap and he said, oh, she'd left of her own accord half-an-hour ago. Glad I was she felt so much better.'

Evan didn't get in till after midnight. He must have had an accident, too, because he was swaying a bit and couldn't talk very plain. But I gathered he hadn't got a barrel-organ. He'd gone looking in Hyde Park and found a Welsh choir there, and they let him lead the singing till the police came and told them to go home.

IT took us three days to get a barrel-organ, but get it we did. First of all I had to find the street where I had seen the man and his mate, Charlie. We followed them all over London till we found the place where they put the barrel-organ for the night—a repository, it was called. The third morning Owen Roberts went back in the name of the delegation to do business. We waited for him in the boarding-house. Presently there was a telephone-call. It was from Owen. 'Pack the bags, boys,' he says, jubilant, 'and meet me at Paddington station. I've got the most marvellous barrel-organ, and cheap, too.'

So we went to Paddington and waited for him. He was a long time coming. The Cardiff train was in Platform 1 and leaving in ten minutes. We were starting to get anxious and dancing from one foot to the other, when suddenly Owen heaves into sight, pushing the barrel-organ himself down the steep ramp. Well, not so much pushing it, he wasn't. It was pulling him and he was running like stink and hanging on to stop it getting away.

'Quick,' says Ianto, 'put it on the train.'

Owen was sweating and panting after pushing the thing across London, so Evan the Post takes hold and trundles it out on to the platform. Owen flings open the door of a third-class coach. Ianto gets hold of one wheel and me the other and Evan the Post pushes at the shafts with Owen pulling from inside the corridor. The barrel-organ bumps and jangles up against the side of the coach, but we can't seem to get it in anyhow. Down we put it on the platform again and Ianto wipes his brow. 'Know what I reckon, mates,' he says with an expert air. 'Either the door is too narrow or the barrel-organ is too wide.'

At this moment the guard comes along, holding his whistle and his little green flag. 'What's the matter, boys?' he asks.

'Too wide, it is,' says Ianto, blaming it on the organ, characteristic, like.

'Too bad, boys,' says the guard, 'but it doesn't matter, see, because you wouldn't be allowed to put it in by there anyway. You'll have to take it in the luggage-van and pay the freight charge.'

That meant catching the next train. It cost us every penny we had between us for it to go in the van. We travelled with it, not liking to be separated in case something happened. It was a very nice-looking organ, come to see it. A bit battered, like, but sort of valuable and antique-looking, with pictures of ladies

## THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

in nighties along the top of it, holding garlands of flowers.

'How much was it?' asks Ianto.

'Oh, cheap,' says Owen, 'for a fine barrel-organ like that.'

'How cheap, then?' says Ianto, persistent, though we could see Owen was not wishing to discuss vulgar matters like money. But there was no way out, with Ianto sitting on a parcel and glaring at him.

'Twenty-five pounds, but it's special. A ten-tuner, the man said.'

We thought Ianto's parcel must have caught fire. Up he jumped, his eyes blazing with anguish. 'Rack and ruin and squanderous waste. By damn, it's lunatic you must be,' he shouts. 'Irresponsible spendthrift, it is, beggarin' the whole of Pontymochan.' Evans reminds him about it being for charity. 'Charity be blowed,' cried Ianto. 'You don't even know whether the machinery is all right. Let me look. If it's broken we'll stop the train and take it back.'

But Owen glowers at him. 'What do you know about musical instruments, boy? Not a motor, it isn't. You wouldn't know if it was playin' or not.'

Ianto opens his mouth. Then he shuts it again, turns on his heel and leaves the luggage-van.

WELL, the next night we called a special meeting of the association to present the barrel-organ officially. Everyone was there, except Ianto, who had washed his hands of the whole affair. And we were in a state of great trembling eagerness to hear how it played.

We drew lots to see who would be the first to start her up. Owen Roberts won, and with a smile at all present he puts his hand on the crank and turns it. I don't know what we expected to hear, like; probably a rousing march or a polka. But what we didn't expect, and what we got, was a sort of grinding, scrunching, metallic noise.

Evan the Post had a go. Still there was no music coming out. By the end of the evening everyone had tried it, examined it, banged it, shook it, trundled it, and, in fact, done all they could to encourage it into giving us a tune.

Next day Owen sent a letter, special rates, through Evan, to the repository, stating a complaint. Waiting for an answer, the whole village was full of gloom and tension. Then

in a couple of days we got a letter back. It said: 'We are sorry to hear the barrel-organ isn't working to the utmost satisfaction, but it's probably a bit damp, having been standing in the shed a couple of years. Try warming it up in front of a big fire and drying it out.'

Hope sprang into our hearts again. Dai Llewellyn the Bread put his bakery ovens at the association's disposal and for three days the barrel-organ stood in the basement of Dai's bakery, roasting.

Then we had another special meeting. Dai trundled the organ into the committee room looking like a doctor who's done all he can and doesn't want any blame if the patient is dead. The organ was looking a bit singed on the outside and the paint was peeling from one of the ladies, but that didn't matter. What counted was the inside of it.

'All right, boys,' says Owen anxiously. 'Let's see what she plays this time.' And he turns the handle. It was the same as before. Nothing but a lot of miserable clanking. Owen gives it a couple more turns, then stops. 'Gentlemen,' he says, gravely, 'we shall adjourn to the council room and have an extraordinary special meeting.' And he leaves the room with us following behind like we were going to hear the will read after the funeral.

'The fault with our barrel-organ,' says Owen, 'is fundamental and radical. There are several things we can do. Chop it up and sell it as firewood, send it back at huge cost and demand a replacement, write it off as a bad debt, or sue the repository, which would cost us the earth. I want a resolution.'

'What about asking Ianto?' says Evan. 'In a crisis like this, Mister Chairman, bach, I don't think we should let our pride stand in the way.'

Owen shook his head. 'Barrel-organs isn't motors,' he said.

'All right, Mister Chairman,' says Evan, 'I move we write it off. We could draw lots who has the pictures with the ladies on.'

'Anyone to second?' asks Owen.

I seconded, thinking there was nothing else to do, but before Owen could say 'All in favour?' something happened that had us all frozen to our chairs in wild, wonderful astonishment.

From the next room came the sound of a jolly marching tune—'Colonel Bogey,' I think they call it—played on a barrel-organ—our barrel-organ!

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Rooted to the spot we were, for a moment. Then as one man we rushed from the council chamber into the committee room. There, turning the handle of the barrel-organ in the centre of the room, and doing a bit of a dance as well, was Little Ianto, Ianto the Motors's boy. 'I fixed it up for you,' he says, grinning cheeky and knowing.

'What was wrong with it, boy?' asks Owen, delighted.

Little Ianto puts on a wise, professional look. 'Somethin' technical,' he says. 'A mechanical defect, it was. But I fixed it. Shall we discuss terms?'

We looked at each other and nod our heads at Owen. It was the least we could do, see?

'How much?' Owen asks the boy.

'Me da' charges five pounds for a job like that, but seein' it was me, and seein' it's for charity, I'll take thirty bob.'

'Very reasonable,' says Owen, greatly

relieved, and gives him a pound and a ten-bob note from his pocket.

'Well, nosta,' says Little Ianto. 'Glad I was to 'elp. Oh, by the way. If you was thinkin' of usin' that barrel-organ, you'll find the proper handle in a little drawer at the back. That's where I found it. The one you was turnin' was just for changin' the tunes, like.'

And off he goes, leaving us standing there just looking at each other, dumbfounded. I had a strange feeling we'd been done, but how and who by I couldn't tell. But I looked out of the window just then and saw little Ianto run out of the door of the association offices. And coming out of the shadows I saw another figure. Little Ianto handed him something and stuffed something else into his own pocket. It was dark and I couldn't see very well, but the other figure looked terribly remarkable like his father, Ianto the Motors. But I never told anyone.

## To Memory

*What is the secret, Memory, of thy power?  
To summon back what Time has stolen away  
And on thy viewless canvas to portray  
The scenes and actors of a far-flown hour;  
To conjure up a bygone happiness,  
Exhume a buried sorrow, fan the fire  
Of unfulfilled ambitions and desire,  
Inspire a hope or by a doubt oppress.  
Narrow thy dwelling, boundless thy domain—  
Tribute to thee the whole world yields. The love  
And life of centuries is thine to store  
Within the petty compass of the brain,  
And we, unwitting, weave with thee a spell  
That makes the mind a heaven or a hell.*

*If thou wouldst aid my better self to thrive,  
Then, Memory, prepare an obliette  
And therein cast, and happily forget,  
The slights that keep vain grievances alive.  
The petty wrongs, the hasty word unkind,  
The faithless friend, the benefit forgot,  
The voice of slander, leave such weeds to rot  
Within the deepest dungeon of the mind,  
And what may nourish love and loyalty  
And charity of thought and kindly deeds  
That sympathy and understanding breeds  
Each passing hour thou shalt recall to me.  
Thus, Memory, thy silent eloquence  
Shall move my mind to true benevolence.*

NEIL MACLAREN.



## ‘Silent Night, Holy Night’

W. MASON-OWEN

FOR centuries past some of the world's greatest composers have tried to express the Christmas spirit in their musical works—Bach in his *Christmas Oratorio*, Handel in the immortal *Messiah*, to mention only two. The loveliest and most famous piece of Christmas music, however, is no renowned oratorio, but is a beautiful little song of utter simplicity whose popularity has encircled the globe time and time again.

This immortal song—‘Silent Night, Holy Night’—has become as indispensable as the pudding, mince-pie, or festooned Christmas-tree; in fact, Christmas would not be Christmas without a rendering of it. Wherever Yuletide is celebrated, the celebration is always heightened by the melody of this lovely song. But despite its world fame, and the millions who sing it, few can say off-hand who composed the simple words and haunting melody of ‘Silent Night, Holy Night.’ Yet the story of the song's origin is as beautiful as the song itself.

**I**N the tiny village of Hallein, near the Hochberg of Upper Austria, Franz Xavier Gruber was born in the year 1796. From early childhood he showed signs of musical talent and begged his father to let him become a musician. His father, however, being a poorly-paid linen-worker like his ancestors, would not hear of a musical career for his son. No, the lad would do well to consecrate his life to the family's respectable occupation.

So the music-loving boy devoted himself to the weaving-stool and quickly mastered the craft of his forefathers. Nevertheless, as soon as the day's toil was over, he would steal out of the house and run to the home of the village schoolmaster, Andreas Peterlechner, who secretly taught him to read, write, and to play the organ.

At home, Franz invented an ingenious method of continuing his finger-exercises unbeknown to his parents. He inserted small blocks of black and white wood into holes he had made in his bedroom wall, and here he would sit, sometimes into the small hours of the morning, his fingers gliding backwards and forwards over the imaginary ivory keys of a pipe-organ.

Then the day arrived which was to be a milestone in his life. The schoolmaster, whose duties also consisted of playing the church organ, was taken seriously ill, and the whole village feared there would be no organ music to accompany High Mass that day. But Franz Gruber, then only twelve years old, saved the situation when he quietly seated himself at the organ-bench and played the entire service from memory. This feat so impressed the townsfolk that the youth became a local hero overnight.

In the face of the admiration lavished upon his son, father Gruber could no longer deny Franz the privilege of a musical education. So he arranged with a local dealer to supply them with an old piano, on which the boy was allowed to take regular lessons.

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During the next few years Franz continued his diligent study of music in the town of Burghausen, a short distance from his home. He became the organist there before he was sixteen, and held the post for two years. Along with his music, he was also studying for his schoolmaster's certificate. When he eventually received this, Gruber took up a post in the school at Arnsdorf, a small town on the Bavarian border.

Here he remained until 1816, when, just after his twentieth birthday, Franz was appointed headmaster and organist at Oberndorf, where, two years later, he was to compose the fragile masterpiece whose fame was to outshine and outlive its creator.

AT Oberndorf Gruber became an intimate friend of Father Josef Mohr, the parish priest, whose pastime was the writing of hymns and poems. The young organist was with Father Mohr on Christmas Eve, 1818, when the priest was preparing his festive message for the village church the following evening. And just as Father Mohr had written down the words: 'Unto you is born this day . . .' a timid knock sounded on the heavy oak door.

The two opened the door together, and on the doorstep stood a peasant woman, blue with cold and wrapped in a threadbare shawl. She told them of a child having been born earlier that day to a poor, sick woman, the wife of a charcoal-maker, who lived on one of the highest alps in Father Mohr's parish. The shivering, shabby woman explained that the parents had sent her to ask the priest to come and bless the infant so that it might be spared.

When the priest and the organist saw the poverty of the child's birthplace—a dimly-lit wooden hut—and the mother's radiant smile as she lay on her crude bed proudly clutching the infant to her, they were touched and strangely moved. This alpine hut was no Bethlehem manger, there was no resemblance to the City of David, but the sight of such happiness in so humble an abode brought back to the visitors the last words of the priest's Christmas message.

For hours after the midnight service Father Mohr sat in his study thinking of the Christmas wonder he had witnessed. And when later he went to bed sleep did not come easily, for the alpine scene was ever present.

Words kept tumbling through his brain, then the words turned into verses, and when dawn broke Father Mohr had written the simple but moving words. Later that Christmas Day Franz Gruber composed music to fit the verses. And so, 'The Song from Heaven,' as it was then called, was born.

Due to the overactivity of a little mouse, the church organ was out of order, so the priest and the organist each used what they had—their voices and a guitar, which Franz Gruber played beautifully.

After its initial rendering in the tiny church of St Nicholas, Oberndorf, 'The Song from Heaven' quickly spread through every village in the Austrian Tyrol until it eventually reached the ears of the King and Queen of Saxony. They were so impressed with the words and music that they asked for the piece to be sung in the Royal Court Saxon Chapel in Pleisensburg Castle on Christmas Eve. And they had their wish, for on Christmas Eve the four Strasser children, Joseph, Caroline, Andreas, and little Amalie—concert artists who were said to have the most beautiful voices of all the children in the Austrian Tyrol—sang like nightingales, to give the immortal song a royal send-off on its trek around the world.

ALTHOUGH the melody was already world-famous by 1850, few knew the name of its composer, and many romantic legends were invented by imaginative people to account for its origin.

In 1854 a group of court musicians wrote to St Peter's Monastery, in Salzburg, inquiring whether there were any documents there that would throw light on the origin of this well-loved Christmas song. The monks at St Peter's were about to give up their search for the missing document as fruitless when, quite by accident, up spoke a youthful choir-boy, who claimed to be the youngest son of Franz Gruber. The boy explained that his father had composed the song thirty-six years ago and that he was still alive, although poor, and could, if necessary, prove his authorship.

When the world learned that this unknown, poverty-stricken schoolmaster from Upper Austria had composed the greatest of all Christmas songs, innumerable stories were put into circulation. One story told how Franz had a dream in which the Saviour had selected him to introduce to the world this heavenly melody; another story explained

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that the song was composed by Gruber after he had buried his young wife. Finally, the true story was dragged from the author himself, and, even though he established himself as the author of the song, Gruber remained an unknown figure.

Father Mohr was more fortunate, however, for 'The Song from Heaven' has the distinction of being commemorated by a monument which stands in the centuries-old church-

yard of St Nicholas, Oberndorf, and this shows Pastor Mohr standing by a window in Heaven listening to an angel singing his hymn.

So this Christmas, when we join the millions of other songsters in all parts of the world in the singing of 'Silent Night, Holy Night,' let us honour the memory of both Franz Xavier Gruber and Father Josef Mohr. They should not remain forgotten by a world which, once a year, chants their Christmas message.



## Laying the Board

### *The Origins of Dining-tables and their Appurtenances*

ELIZABETH WALSH

'HAVE you laid the table?' How often that pre-meal question irritates us into wishing there were no tables to lay. Yet this dull, routine job has a surprisingly romantic history, for long before we British had outgrown our woad wardrobes other civilisations were 'laying the table.'

Early Egyptian paintings, of about the 15th century before Christ, show tables decorated with fruit and flowers, and laid with dishes. The ancient Greeks also used tables. But it was the empire-building Romans who spread the fashion of dining at table all over the world.

When the Romans invaded Britain in 55 B.C. they found the early Britons very primitive as to dining equipment. Their tables, when they existed, were just rough boards laid on trestles; their plates, squares of wood slightly hollowed in the middle; their drinking-vessels of horn, wood, or crude earthenware; their spoons of wood; and

their knives more in the nature of daggers.

In the few hundred years the Romans remained in these islands they managed to instil a proper feeling for dining-tables, and many of the Britons became entirely Romanised. They lay on couches to dine, and ate off the imported red Samian ware, using their newly-acquired pointed spoons to lever oysters from their shells, just like their conquerors.

With the arrival of the Saxons, however, British dinner-tables changed in appearance once more, becoming far more closely allied to those of our own day, and therefore it is from this period that the history of our own table-laying really begins.

The Saxons soon put a stop to lying down to meals, preferring to sit on benches placed at round or oblong tables. The latter were the more common, and were made of boards resting on trestles, the heavy wood and bronze tables favoured by the Romans being

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thus forsaken for the earlier British pattern.

'Laying the board' became the accepted term for setting these tables, and from it we get the familiar phrases 'board and lodging,' 'festive board,' and the more modern offshoot, 'boarding-house.'

The Normans introduced the shaped table, at which the lord and lady of the castle, with their family and guests, sat, looking down on their servants. During the trouble between King John and the Barons the position of the trestles changed again: the family sat on a dais, and the knights and servants at tables ranged round the walls, so that they might eat 'with their backs to the wall,' and not be surprised by the arrival of their enemies disguised as peaceful travellers.

This custom continued until Elizabethan days, when, greatly to the annoyance of the household staff, the family began to dine apart, first behind a screen, and later in a separate dining-room. The tables then became 'dormant,' there being no necessity to move them after meals, and it is from these 16th- and 17th-century tables and sideboards that our modern dining-room furniture is derived.

Louis XV of France once designed dining-room tables known as *tables volantes*. These appear to have been of two varieties, the first being a mechanical contrivance, rather like a modern lift, which, on the pressing of a button, descended to the kitchen below, leaving the guests seated round a gaping hole, until, like a jack-in-the-box, the table reappeared with another course spread upon it. The second type comprised a table with little trap-doors through which the plates disappeared between courses, to be cleared and refilled by servants crouching under the table. In his book *The Art of Dining*, Abraham Hayward, writing in the middle of last century, tells us that one such table was shown to a friend of his when visiting the Villa of La Favorita, near Palermo.

**A**NOTHER custom brought to us by the Romans was that of sex segregation during meals. The Saxons changed this habit, being accustomed to dine together, and it is from them that we inherit the placing of men and women alternately round the table.

Possibly it was this feminine influence that led to the use of table-linen. Early Saxon drawings show us that these tablecloths

reached almost to the ground, and were sometimes knotted at the corners. The first mention of them occurs in a very early work, entitled *Sea Kings in England*, from which we learn that they were often made of rich crimson cloth, with wide gilt margins.

There was a certain ritual about laying the table at this time. When the cloth was spread, the salt-cellar had to be placed upon it before anything else. Salt was a very precious commodity in the past. It was used to preserve the autumn-killed meat throughout the winter months, and therefore became a symbol of life, by saving communities from starvation.

Superstitions about salt abounded. One of the best-known remains with us to-day, that of it being unlucky to spill salt on the table-cloth; and those who insist on throwing three pinches of it over their left shoulders to restore their fortunes are giving way to some ancestral urge that links them to their Saxon forebears!

Owing to its symbolic significance, the salt-cellar was not only the richest and most ornamental vessel on the table, but was used also as a barrier between the master of the house, with his family and guests, and household servants and chance travellers, who in those days all sat at the same table. This custom lasted a very long time, as late as the 17th and 18th centuries, when the salt-cellars were often made in the shape of chariots or ships, mounted on wheels. To be asked to sit above the salt was an honour; to presume to sit above the salt unasked was a breach of good manners, rewarded in the olden days by a shower of well-sucked bones from the diners who knew how to behave!

Bread, as 'the staff of life,' ranked next in importance, and Wright, in his excellent book *Domestic Manners*, tells us that the Saxons placed silver baskets of white wheaten buns on the table immediately after the salt-cellar. In this they were much in advance of the later Norman and mediæval diners, who used thick rounds of bread as plates. These were known as 'trenchers,' and a 'good trencherman' was one who consumed his plate when dinner was over!

There were two reasons for using trenchers. The first was that, in times of invasion and civil war, it saved washing-up and transport; the second was that, in times of peace, trenchers became a convenient means of charity, being covered with table scraps,

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collected in baskets, and distributed to the poor and needy, who waited daily at the castle gates for left-overs. This feeding of the poor by the wealthy, and by the monasteries, was a religious obligation; possibly this is why, when money is needed for charity, we still 'hand round the plate.'

TRENCHERS, or 'manchets,' as they were later called, gradually disappeared during the 16th and 17th centuries, to be replaced by plates. Materials for these varied from gold and silver to wood and pewter. Earthenware plates were not often in use till later, but there are records showing that Queen Elizabeth had two china plates that appear to have been great treasures. It was also in her reign that tiny coloured sweetmeat plates were first used. In shape and design plates have changed very little down the centuries.

After the bread-baskets were set on the table, the Saxons laid silver finger-bowls and table-napkins of fine linen on it. These were an absolute necessity, as not only did the Saxons eat with their fingers, but it was also the custom for every lady to share her trencher with the gentleman who escorted her in to dinner. This frequent finger-washing lasted until the 17th century, when the introduction of forks made finger-bowls more of a decoration, as, indeed, they are to-day.

Even table-napkins became only a decoration at this time, and Charles Cooper, in his book *The English Table*, tells us that King Charles II's favourite artist, Giles Rose, gave the King's 'Officers of the Mouth' detailed instructions on folding a table-napkin twenty-six different ways—as a melon, a hen and chickens, a bishop's mitre, a sucking pig, or a turbot, to mention but a few of the designs.

Drinking-vessels were provided by Saxon hosts, honoured guests drinking from gold and silver cups, and those of lesser degree from horn or wooden bowls.

Cutlery, however, was not laid upon the table until the 18th century, for diners provided their own eating implements, bringing them themselves, except when attending a banquet, or a very formal private dinner, such as Pepys mentions in his *Diary*, when it was the custom to send them in advance by a servant.

Spoons were the earliest means of conveying food to the mouth, other than by the

fingers, knives being too sharp for this purpose: indeed, spoons ruled every dish served by the Saxon, Norman, and mediæval cooks. Early cookery-books show that the main recipes were for hotchpotch, soup, rag-outs, hash, stew, and other messes. Roast and boiled meats were 'hacked and hewed' into 'gobbets' (small pieces) before being dished, although birds were served on spits and torn into pieces with the fingers as elegantly as possible.

Many terms we use to-day linger from the time when spoons were all-important. To be 'spoon-fed' was first applied to those too lazy to learn the difficult art of eating with a fork. And, even more interesting, is the origin of 'spoony' or 'spooning' in connection with courting couples. It was the custom for young men to give their sweethearts 'love-spoons' as a token that they intended to marry them. This continued from Saxon times to within living memory, particularly in the remoter areas, such as Wales. These spoons were made of wood, usually by the lover himself, and were often decorated with a lover's-knot on the handle.

The holding of spoons aloft in wishing health to absent friends was another 17th-century custom, and it is mentioned by the poet Herrick. And we still give spoons as christening presents. Usually these are of silver, with the figures of the Twelve Apostles forming the handles: and the saying 'born with a silver spoon in his mouth' refers to these presents from godparents.

Knives have an equally interesting history. In the time of the early Britons they were daggers, and were hung from the belt or girdle. The Romans introduced knives with dagger points, while the Saxon knives were not unlike a modern razor, made of steel, and inlaid with bronze. There is no mention of table-knives, as such, being made in England until 1563, but it is probable that they were made before that date, for Chaucer refers to them as 'whittles' a century earlier: hence 'to whittle,' meaning to cut with a knife.

In his book *The English Table* Charles Cooper tells us that all knives were pointed until Cardinal Richelieu of France ordered them to be made with rounded ends because he disliked seeing his guests using the points as toothpicks! Such was his power that in 1669 an edict forbidding the use of pointed knives at table was pronounced

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with due solemnity, and obeyed by the whole of Europe!

Right up to the reign of William III and Mary 'bride knives' were orthodox wedding-presents, and the bride was expected to wear one suspended from her girdle during the ceremony, showing, no doubt, that, having received a love-spoon, she had qualified for a bride knife, and was thus fully equipped to take her place at her husband's table.

WHAT can only be described as a revolution in eating habits, and in table-laying, was caused by the introduction of the fork to this country. This useful implement was used in Roman times, but is one of the few domestic tools they do not seem to have passed on to their colonials, although from the finding of a fork in a Saxon burial-ground in Wiltshire it would seem that some survived. The reason for their non-use in this country is therefore something of a mystery.

Elsewhere in Europe there appears to have been a similar slowness in adopting the fork. The earliest mention of its use is in Italy in the 15th century, and in France a little later; but in England it seems to have been virtually unknown until Thomas Coryate brought some back from Italy in 1608. This extraordinary little man resigned from being court jester to King James I's eldest son, Prince Henry, to hitch-hike across Europe, and to become the author of the first European guidebook, quaintly called *Coryate's Crudities*.

In his book Coryate tells us that when in Italy he noticed that the Italians 'do always at their meals use little forks when they cut up their meat. . . . The reason for this curiosity is because the Italians cannot by any reason endure to have the dish touched by fingers, seeing all men's fingers are not alike clean. Hereupon, I myself thought good to imitate the Italian fashion . . . not only in Italy, but also in Germany and oftentimes in England since I came home.'

Coryate's new table-manners made him 'table talk and pointed at,' and laughed at, too, by his friends, who 'quipped' him unmercifully as a 'miserable fork user.' But the

ex-jester had a powerful ally in making forks something more than an amusing novelty. As a token of gratitude for a travelling grant given him by Prince Henry, Coryate had presented King James I, and all the royal family, with silver forks in red leather cases. Now, King James had a rooted objection to washing and saw in the regular use of a fork a means of escaping from the frequent use of his finger-bowl. Not only did he receive his gift with alacrity, but he made eating with a fork 'the thing to do' at court.

Although the silversmiths had begun to make silver forks almost immediately, the custom of their general use was slow, and as late as 1647 we find the playwright John Fletcher making a character say: 'Who would make hay of his food, and pitch it into his mouth with a fork!'

Frederick Hackwood, in his book *Good Cheer*, tells us of one opportunist, Charles Rivet by name, who made a fortune during the Commonwealth by advertising knives and forks with handles made from the bronze statue of Charles I on horseback, which he claimed that Cromwell had sold to him as scrap-metal. As this statue had disappeared from public view shortly after the King's execution, many Royalists believed this story and bought the souvenirs: but later the statue was found intact, and erected on its present site in Trafalgar Square overlooking Whitehall.

The change that the adoption of the fork made to the British way of life is amazing. Not only were roasted joints served whole at table, but forks were used for vegetables and sweetmeats as well. And etiquette-books of the period added forks to the list of implements that 'the lady and gentleman' did not wipe on the tablecloth! The saying 'fingers were made before forks' became merely the feeble excuse of those too old-fashioned to change their mode of eating, although foreign tourists in Britain said that English ladies used the fork gracefully from the start.

So, with the placing of this most modern eating weapon on the table, we have finished laying the board, with the help of our ancestors.



# *The Finest Pipemaker in Russia*

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WOLF MANKOWITZ

MY great-grandfather was certainly the finest pipemaker in Russia—or at least in that part where he lived. Not only did everyone worth noticing buy a pipe from my great-grandfather, but even landowners and the owner of the large timber business in the next village came to him for their best pipes even if they sometimes smoked others made by inferior craftsmen. And so my great-grandfather was a very famous man indeed, for, although you can live your whole life and only hear of Napoleon when someone digs up a French coin or an old rusted sabre, you cannot smoke a good pipe without remembering who made it, and you wish him many more years, so that he can go on making you pipes, although, of course, my great-grandfather's pipes were not such bad workmanship that you needed perhaps more than two in a lifetime. But you would be pleased for him to live a long time, anyway. Once, however, my great-grandfather made a bad pipe—and even then he made it bad for a good reason. He was the finest pipemaker in Russia and would never have made a bad pipe unless he had had a very good reason.

It happens that this pipe was bad because of what took place on a Sabbath morning. Not that my great-grandfather made the pipe on a Sabbath. I would not like anyone to think that of him. Any pipe made on a Sabbath morning—it goes without saying—is not likely to draw well after the Sabbath has gone out. And my great-grandfather was not the man to make pipes at any time except when a respectable man should make pipes. No, my great-grandfather was not in his workshop on this particular Sabbath morning. He was, as of course you would expect, in the synagogue with the other men of the village. Where else should he be? But it had to be on this particular morning that somebody should want to make himself a nuisance by coming to my great-grandfather for a pipe. My grandfather was not at the synagogue. If he had been confirmed, he would have been there. As it was, he was sitting in my great-grandfather's workshop playing with a chisel and a piece of wood. Well, he was young. Suddenly my great-grandmother rushed into the workshop, calling out: 'So where are you, Yankele? Why don't you answer?

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Put down your father's tools. What do you mean on a Sabbath morning playing with tools? Run quickly to the synagogue and tell your father he should come home straight away.'

My grandfather was young, but he was not so young that he did not know my great-grandfather to have a big, heavy hand all hard with working wood. So he did not rush out like a mad person straightway to do as my great-grandmother had asked. Instead, he thought for a moment, and then he said: 'Supposing I go and tell my father he should come home. What will he say? He won't say anything. He will give me a clout on the head. On the Sabbath he says he doesn't want to know about the house. Only if it's burning down should you try to fetch him from the synagogue.' Which was true, because my great-grandfather was a pious man. He used to say: 'If God has given us six days, can't we spare him one?' And who could answer him? There was no answer. Everyone stood dumb.

But my great-grandmother said: 'Yankele, if you don't hurry to the synagogue and bring home your father I will give you such a clout on the head you won't argue any more.'

This made my grandfather think: If I stay here, I get a clout on the head. If I go to the synagogue, I get a clout on the head. At least let me get away from the nearest one first. But he looked obedient and said to my great-grandmother: 'All right, but what shall I tell my father so that he won't give me a clout on the head? Why should he come home right away? The house isn't burning.'

My great-grandmother could see that what grandfather said was reasonable, so she answered quickly: 'Outside is waiting a lord with a big carriage with horses and a coachman, and he wants father to make him an extra-special pipe.'

Not many lords came to my great-grandfather's workshop. 'If they are satisfied with inferior workmanship, it is their own business,' my great-grandfather used to say. So that when a lord came my great-grandmother was bound to be very excited, and so was my grandfather excited, and he rushed out to see the carriage and the horses and, of course, the lord.

The lord was in the kitchen sitting by the stove. He was a big man, with a lot of furs on him, and he was sucking a thick cheroot. My grandfather could see he needed a pipe

badly and told him: 'I am going to fetch my father, who is the finest pipemaker in Russia, to make you a pipe.'

And the big man said: 'Good. Here is a sixpence for you. Run quickly.' And to my great-grandmother he said: 'Have you any vodka in the house?'

MY grandfather ran out of the house without even putting his hat on. It was snow everywhere, you understand—real heavy thick snow covering everything, not like in this country, where an inch is a lot, but real heavy thick snow. When it melted, sometimes you would find a cow which had been lost all the winter, or sometimes even a drunken man last heard of months ago. But my grandfather was very strong although he was not yet confirmed, and he was thinking of the boiled butter-beans he could buy at school with the sixpence, so he ran over the snow like a wolf, and the cold did not bother him.

Still, the synagogue was two miles away, and before my grandfather got there he stopped running, and when he stopped running he began to think of how without letting himself in for a clout on the head he could ask my great-grandfather to leave the synagogue. When he did get to the synagogue he still had not thought of a way, so he went up to my great-grandfather, who was praying with a big shawl round him, and he touched his hand and waited. Then my great-grandfather, who was a very big man indeed, looked down and smiled through his beard and nodded his head and went on praying. He thought my grandfather had come to the synagogue to be with the men praying, and said to himself: 'Perhaps he will be a student and a teacher after all. Perhaps he will turn out to be a credit, although he is developing late.'

But my grandfather was feeling very nervous with his hand in his pocket fingering the sixpence which the lord had given him, because he suddenly remembered that he would get a clout on the head even if it was only because he had taken money on the Sabbath. After a while he looked up at my great-grandfather again and said quietly: 'My mother wants you to come home.'

My great-grandfather was very surprised, and replied: 'What?'

My grandfather looked away and said even

## THE FINEST PIPEMAKER IN RUSSIA

more quietly: 'She wants you to come home because someone wishes to see you.'

My great-grandfather looked even more surprised, and was also beginning to look angry. He blew through his beard: 'What? Yankele, on a Sabbath morning you come to synagogue to bring me home to the house? What does it mean? I will give you a clout on the head.'

My grandfather knew to expect this, so he had already moved a few yards away, and he answered: 'A lord is waiting by the house. He wants you to make him a pipe. He is a lord with a carriage and horses and even a coachman. And he is wearing a big fur coat.'

But my great-grandfather still looked angry and surprised. It had never happened before, this being sent messages at the synagogue in the middle of the Sabbath morning to come home and make a pipe. Well, what could you expect from a woman and a boy not yet confirmed? But this was too much already. He chewed his beard and said: 'A lord is waiting? Well, and shouldn't he wait? Tell this lord he must wait for my Lord. And leave me alone on a Sabbath morning, Yankele, or I'm telling you I will give you such a clout on the head you will never forget it.'

MY grandfather was already out of the synagogue. He ran for a time, but because it was two miles back to the house he began to walk and think of how he could tell the lord what my great-grandfather's message was without getting maybe the hardest clout of all.

He saw the lord walking up and down outside the house, and he was breathing out big clouds of steam like the horses, which were also breathing out big clouds, but the lord's clouds were even bigger than the horses'. The lord was walking up and down with his hands in fur gloves behind his back, so my grandfather went first to the closet which was at the bottom of the piece of ground my great-grandfather kept for his cow and his cherry-trees and he hid his sixpence under the seat, and then he called out to the lord what the message was and ran back to the closet. My grandfather heard the lord shout at my great-grandmother: 'Well, then, must I wait a month for this pipemaker? Is he a lord, or am I? Must I wait until the thaw? Well, must I wait all day?' And the lord got into his carriage and his horses pulled him away

to the inn at the next village, which was on the other side of the hill.

WHEN my great-grandfather arrived back from the synagogue he greeted my great-grandmother, and the next thing he said was: 'Now, Yetta, is dinner ready yet?' And then he asked: 'Where is that Yankele? And what did he want? And don't you know any better than to send him for me on a Sabbath morning? What do you mean?' When my great-grandmother explained to him he said: 'Aha! So the lord is getting tired of his bad pipes. When he tries everybody else's pipes and finds out how bad they are he comes to me. Aha!'

Then in the afternoon, when my grandfather had come out of the closet, he was taken with my great-grandfather to the next village, to the inn. The inn smelt very strong. 'Faugh, faugh,' said my great-grandfather.

All the peasants who spotted my great-grandfather greeted him with respect, because they knew he was the finest pipemaker in Russia and a credit to the neighbourhood, and, besides that, he was a very big man, who had beaten a drunken peasant once who shouted after him in the street.

The lord was drinking in the inn, and when he saw my great-grandfather he shouted: 'Well, are you a pipemaker? Why do you keep me waiting? Are you a bigger lord than you can keep me waiting?'

My great-grandfather answered him: 'Sir, if when you are in the army your general calls for you, you go?'

The lord drank a glassful of vodka and replied: 'Yes, of course you go. In the army when a general calls you, you go.'

My great-grandfather continued: 'And how long do you stay with your general?'

The lord looked at my great-grandfather with an unpleasant look: 'So you have not done any military service? What do you mean, how long? When a general calls you, you don't ask how long. You stay there until he tells you to go away.'

My great-grandfather paused, and all the peasants were standing around looking at him as if they were dumb, and my grandfather knew that they thought he was a clever man because he was getting the lord into such a deep argument. My grandfather had heard the argument before and this time he did not think it was so clever. Why argue with a

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lord? With a peasant, yes; with my great-grandmother, yes; with the rabbi even, yes; but with a lord—it was like arguing with a policeman. But my great-grandfather was completing the argument: 'I was called by my general,' he said, pulling his side-whiskers, 'and I had to stay until he told me to go.'

All the peasants looked at one another, and the lord drank another glass of vodka, and my grandfather thought: It is a very fine thing to make arguments, but with a lord I don't think it is so clever.

Then the lord drank still another glass of vodka, whereupon he shouted: 'All right then, all right. Well, then, I want a pipe, a specially good pipe for a present to a prince. You hear, a present to a prince. It must be a good pipe, the best.'

My great-grandfather looked down his nose, and he made some more arguments: 'My pipes are all the best. Would you be coming to me for a pipe if it wasn't the best?'

And my grandfather thought: Arguments, always arguments he's making.

The lord went on: 'Very well. This one must be better. And, most important of all, it must have a carved eagle on the bowl. It is no good without a carved eagle. It is for a prince, and he must have an eagle, otherwise it is no good.'

My grandfather expected more arguments, but, instead, my great-grandfather said very quietly: 'Very well. With a carved eagle it will be good, otherwise it is no good. Right.'

'Yes,' said the lord. 'It must have an eagle, and I want it to-morrow.'

**N**OW my grandfather really expected arguments. Sabbath was not yet out, and the lord wanted his pipe to-morrow! When could it be made? To make a good pipe takes

a long time. My great-grandfather liked to make a pipe in his own time. You said to him one day: 'Moishe, you know I would like a pipe.' And he would say: 'Yes, a good pipe is a very good thing.' And two or three months later when he met you in the street he would say: 'Here you are. Here is a pipe you will like.'

But for this lord a pipe had to be made with an eagle, otherwise it was no good. 'All right,' said my great-grandfather. And he sat up all night to make a pipe with an eagle carved on the bowl.

When in the morning my grandfather went into the workshop, he saw the pipe lying on the bench. It had a fine eagle carved on it, with big wings curling down to the stem, and the wings were made up of Hebrew letters carefully carved to look like a row of feathers.

The lord came early with his coach and horses, and he came in and saw the pipe and paid my great-grandfather what he asked—twelve roubles, and he liked the finely-carved eagle very much. He gave my grandfather another sixpence, and now my grandfather was fingering two sixpences in his pocket.

Afterwards my great-grandfather said to my grandfather: 'This lord must have an eagle carved, but the pipe is not so important. He knows what one of his generals can do, but my general is not so important. All right, then, I have given him a pipe I should wish my worst friend. Two, three years a pipe like this could last'—my great-grandfather knew when he made a bad pipe, because he was certainly the finest pipemaker in Russia—"and I have carved on it the Prayer for the Dead. How long can a prince like that live, anyway?"

But my grandfather thought: For two sixpences I can have boiled butter-beans every day for a year.

## Song of Christmas

*Shine out, oh holly berries,  
Shine out across the snow,  
And glisten on your branches,  
Oh silver mistletoe;  
And little wren and robin,  
Sing sweetly as you may,  
For Jesus Christ our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas Day.*

*Come carol, all you children,  
And sing your songs of mirth;  
And church-bells, peal your loudest  
For joy upon the earth,  
Because, to bring us blessing,  
And make us glad and gay,  
Sweet Jesus Christ our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas Day.*

ELIZABETH FLEMING.



## Paris Gambles

R. N. STEWART

'WHERE can I gamble?' That was the invariable question of the business men I entertained in Paris. When asked: 'What sum are you prepared to gamble with?' the usual reply was: 'Well, I do not mind losing £100.' 'Splendid,' I would retort, 'but it would be better to give the sum to the concierge now and go and do something more amusing. If you intend to lose £100, nothing is more certain than that you will lose it. If you tell me you will stop playing when you have won £50, then we will go and have a try.'

My friends generally played in the gambling clubs, which by French law are licensed for men only. Membership is by election, and the candidate has to be proposed and seconded. In some of the better-class ones a small entrance-fee is asked. Since the War there is a period of from three to four days during which inquiry is made about the candidate. This may seem a short time, but it is only to find out if the Sûreté have any black record. Social qualifications are supposed to be guaranteed by the candidate's proposer.

These clubs do well financially, but they are heavily taxed. The collection of the tax and the club's portion is done by the croupier at the table the moment it is due. This money is put into a sealed box, called the cagnotte, and it is only opened in seclusion by the authorities. The amount taken by the State used to be 65 per cent. of the first million francs and a higher percentage on subsequent millions.

The law prescribes that the owners of a gambling club must be Frenchmen, and, apart from the owners, there has to be a president, committee, and secretary, whose business it is to see to the eligibility of candidates, the behaviour of members in the club, and the amenities offered.

The sites chosen are nearly always in the more popular districts of the city and almost without exception one or two floors above the ground-level.

A gambling club has to be made attractive to its members, and the premises also contain reading and writing rooms, billiards room, and a first-class restaurant and bar. Some clubs even have hairdressing establishments.

No member is forced to gamble. Indeed, it is possible to be a member for years and never gamble, but just enjoy the amenities.

It is never the intention of the management to make a profit from the bar or restaurant. They are, in fact, quite prepared to sustain slight loss on them, provided these amenities please members. The management know full well that the gaming-tables are sufficient attraction in themselves.

THERE are only two games played in the gambling-room — *chemin de fer* and *baccarat*, though some clubs have an occasional game of *écarté*.

The croupiers and changeurs are professionals, attired in the conventional dress of their trade. There is an office where chips

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can be bought or exchanged and where the members can cash their cheques, though this privilege of cashing cheques is only extended to those members of whose financial standing the management are assured.

As the State claims so large a percentage of the cagnotte, it takes an interest in seeing that the rules are complied with and frequently sends inspectors to watch the gaming-tables. Plain-clothes police have the right to come at any time. Both these visitations are unobtrusive and most of the members are unaware when the inspections take place.

The stakes vary, but the minimum unit at chemin de fer is generally 1000 francs, and the cagnotte takes 5 per cent of each winning coup. Even with an initial stake of 1000 francs, the game can quickly become one where large sums change hands, and it is no unusual sight to see a bank of over 100,000 francs. The member taking the hand is entitled to have a partner, who may have come in at the beginning, or who may buy his half-share of the bank at any point. The banker of the moment is at liberty to pass the hand at any time he feels inclined and any gambler can quit the table whenever he chooses.

At the beginning of a hand at 'chemy' the amount at stake is nearly always covered by the players sitting at the table; they have priority of staking by virtue of sitting there. When the bank gets bigger, the whole sum in the bank may not be covered by the sitting punters, and then those standing round can make up the balance if they wish.

These games at chemin de fer in the clubs are much more intimate affairs than similar ones in casinos. The members probably know each other and there is more of a sense of camaraderie than there is among the wider clientele of a casino.

Baccarat is rather different. A syndicate of people, among whom the management of the club may have an interest, put up a capital sum to run an open bank. This sum has to be fairly large, because it is to the baccarat-table that the big gamblers come, and there may be several members staking as much as 500,000 francs a throw, apart from twenty or thirty other people staking sums from 1000 to 50,000 francs at the same throw.

At baccarat (open bank) the State permits of a reduced tax—2 per cent instead of 5 per cent. This tax is deducted from the initial sum the banker has to put up to meet the first

coup; and on each subsequent coup where the banker has to add money to meet his losing coups. The banker pays no tax on his winning coups. This reduced tax privilege is only allowed for six deals a day. Each deal (spoken of as a 'sabot') consists of six packs of cards. The usual times of play at baccarat are three sabots before dinner and three after dinner.

IT is interesting to watch the gamblers playing and to note their reactions to the various turns in fortune. These clubs have members of widely differing means, temperament, and nationality. Some are rich men, who come for an hour's relaxation and are comparatively indifferent to the way in which fortune may treat them. They play a few coups hoping to win, but are not seriously bothered if they lose. There are men of lesser means, who gamble in the same way, but these hope to win a modest sum to pay the day's expenses. This type of gambler is, as a rule, too careful or knowledgeable to risk any sum the loss of which might embarrass him. There is the habitual gambler with a system. He plays every day, and uses his system to prevent himself from gambling every coup. Then there is the man who desperately requires a sum in excess of his normal income and thinks that the gaming-table gives him the best chance of achieving his ambition. Finally, the rather pathetic individual who has been bitten by the gambling fever and is compelled by it to play every coup, hoping that the laws of mathematics are not made to apply to him and that he will be the one example to disprove an inexorable rule that the chances are in favour of the banker. Round a baccarat-table there is no noisy drama, but the signs of intense emotion are all too plain in the players' faces, especially of those who swim in deeper waters than prudence counsels.

The management of the clubs is composed of shrewd men. They provide the opportunity for the indulgence of a human weakness, but they never force the individual to indulge. All they do is to make the path an easy and pleasant one, knowing quite well that man's nature will do the rest. In all the clubs there is a percentage of members who come for a short hectic career—it may be weeks, months, or a year or two; then, having lost more than they can afford, they disappear again into

## PARIS GAMBLERS

the limbo. But, to be fair to the club owners, these are not the type of member they seek to profit by; indeed, they regret the advent of this weak kind of member and would refuse him entry if they had the power. No club seeks to be the means of pauperising any individual. It is bad publicity.

**G**AMBLING at chemin de fer and baccarat is a very concentrated business and in some ways unlike other forms of gambling, in that the bets take place on the average once a minute, and as the session of baccarat lasts three hours it takes no great skill at mathematics to calculate the possibility of disaster.

The worst misfortune that can happen to someone who has the gambling fever is to have a run of good fortune at his first visit. It would be so much better if the cards were

against him and on this occasion he was very hard hit indeed; it might be costly, but not irretrievably so. Such a reverse can cure the fever. It is so easy to forget that the chances are always in favour of the bank and the certainty of the cagnotte. In fact, it has been stated that if eight people each with a hundred units of money sit down and play chemin de fer for twelve hours, at the expiry of this time none of the players will have anything and the whole eight hundred units will be in the cagnotte.

The gambling clubs of Paris offer their members a good service, a fair game, and no publicity. A man can win a large sum and yet is not 'News' as he would be if he did the same thing in a casino. These places offer rather heady entertainment, and to some temperaments it may be dangerous, but not to men with a modicum of self-control. Those without it should eschew the places.



## Vox Populi *How to Play Fringers*

G. V. BIRD

IT began on a wet afternoon during the holidays. John was aged seventeen, so it must have been 1933 or thereabouts. He was flipping over the pages of our daily paper when he became absorbed and started to mutter to himself admiringly. 'You know, my children,' he said, 'these letters to the Editor are unbelievable. Listen to this.'

Linda and I listened with some respect to one or two very fine specimens, but the usual family wrangle started when John insisted that no one outside the nursery could believe the letters to be genuine and that un-

doubtedly—young men were very cynical in 1933—a hand-picked member of the editorial staff was chosen to write them himself. Linda, of course, contradicted John on principle, and the uproar was only quietened when we decided to consult Uncle Timothy, who was reputed to be very knowledgeable about Fleet Street.

'Bless you,' Uncle Timothy's voice boomed over the telephone, 'there's not the slightest need for the staff to write 'em. The lunatic fringe seem to spend all their time writing letters, and the only real difficulty is to select

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the choicest from the hundreds that roll in.'

That was the start of our immemorial family game of 'lunatic fringes,' commonly known as 'fringers,' and we sat down to compose suitable letters forthwith.

JOHN and I were rather hurt because our first letters were ignored and Linda had her maiden effort published. It went something like this:

Dear Sir,

Is it not time that we men revolted from the drab costume imposed by Victorian traditions and returned to the sartorial elegance of the great periods of our history? A feeble attempt was made a decade ago with Oxford bags, but if, in the millions of homes that your great paper reaches, a determined drive were made for the return of satins, cocked hats, and ringlets, we would re-create this grand old country of ours.

Yours faithfully,  
Hugo Bashworthy.

A smart follow-up from my pen was printed, pointing out the danger to the foundations of our national greatness if the male sex were brought into ridicule, and hinting that Mr Bashworthy was in the pay of hairdressers and costumiers. John's letter on the unsuitability of the male calf for public exhibition was crowded out in the rush.

By the end of the holiday, fringers was well established, with a strict code of rules and a permanent sweepstake on the basis of a half-penny a point. Original letters were awarded 10 points, follow-ups 5; a bonus of 20 points was given for a published letter signed 'Mother of Eight,' or a very near variation, and a panel of experts, usually our parents, gave a monthly award of up to 15 points for the most asinine letter of the month. When the scores were getting sizable, John, who was our accountant, drew up a balance-sheet and we had a grand settling-day.

Linda continued to score steadily, although I had a good run when I thought of seeking inspiration in old minutes of the school debating-society. For some months I notched up the points with letters on capital punishment, whether one should give one's seat in a bus to a lady, the plausibility of Loch Ness and other monsters, the degradation of amusement arcades, modern painting and poetry and the sublimity of ditto, how to grow old

gracefully, and innumerable other subjects which have impassioned the upper school for the last fifty years.

JOHN never really understood the essence of fringers, and the drain on his pocket must have been severe. Of course, he had his successes. Accounts of his observation of various improbable birds, such as the pink-plumed shrike, were occasionally printed and gave rise to a little desultory correspondence in off-seasons, and when we extended our activities to the women's weeklies he developed an unsuspected talent for putting embarrassing problems to the various kindly aunties who dispensed advice in those journals.

When he was at Cambridge, fringers had a season of strong popularity with his friends, but these friends could never touch the home team. As Linda would smugly point out, spurious metaphysics and whimsy gets you nowhere in fringers. I remember John trying to start a movement to dress civil servants in yellow robes embroidered with dragons. His letter started: 'The widespread belief that government in this country is conducted by popular clamour is quite illusory; in fact, we are governed mandarin-fashion by two or three hundred senior civil servants who should be distinguished by appropriate dress.' Hopeless, quite hopeless!

FRINGERS survived John's marriage and the advent of Linda junior in 1939 and was only halted by the War. From 1945 onwards it was child's play owing to the general obsession with food and the curious divergence of opinion on the historical diet of the British manual worker. Scoring was fast and furious, with innumerable variations of: 'Dear Sir, I am a working man aged 80. Until the present government took over I never missed a day without having a pound of steak and a pint of porter for dinner'; 'As a worker of 60 years' experience I can honestly say I never had a square meal until 1945'; 'From careful observation, I declare that the present standard of living on the Continent is much below ours'; 'I have lived in France for the last two years. If the citizens of that gallant country had to eat what we do, there would be a second French Revolution'; 'Hats off to the Food Minister'; 'String up the Food Minister.'

## THE ABBEY OF DUNNIMAGHAILL

During the last few months Linda and I have been rather perturbed by the strong form shown by John. Ugly suspicions have been aroused, and last settling-day, when Linda was handing over 3s. 4d. (stakes are now a penny a point owing to the rise in the cost of living), she said, rather coldly: 'You know, John, your prose style is becoming

strangely like your daughter's. You may have forgotten that I see a good deal of her homework.'

John began to bluster, but we finally broke him down. Linda junior is probably still wondering who put an envelope containing 3s. 4d. into her satchel—with the anonymous message: 'Conscience money.'



## *The Abbey of Dunnimaghail*

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### H. DRUMMOND GAULD

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IT was my first visit to this remote part of Ireland, and the loneliness and beauty of the scenery as I journeyed all that livelong day had exercised upon me an influence so profound that I felt I had passed within the portals of a world immeasurably fairer than the prosaic, accustomed world in which I had previously dwelt. The change had been gradual, almost imperceptible, and the revelation of it had not been made manifest till a sudden bend of the road unrolled before my enraptured gaze the most enchanting panorama I had ever beheld. And the house wherein I was destined to pass some of the happiest days of my life stood in a sheltered, tree-clad hollow of the ridge looking out upon this scenic splendour. It was truly a retreat in which men from that outer world beyond

the pass would not fail to achieve purification of soul.

From my bedroom window each morning I looked out upon the winding lane, bordered by hawthorn hedges wherein a myriad of feathered songsters made the scented dawn melodious. The tumbled knolls and lush meadows full of wild marigolds and golden buttercups and rosemary and thyme shone in the morning sunshine like velvet of finest sheen. Down in the valley, where the river flowed, a silvery reflection diffused itself upon the moist rocks and dewy banks, upon moss and waving bracken and the shimmering foliage of trees. And along the vista of the valley the delicate green of the hills was softly shaded into a perspective of loveliest blue, where the lofty shoulders and summits of

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farther mountains lured fancy upwards among the snow-white clouds that towered above them in the airy void.

Each morning the sun shone in generous warmth, rousing this enchanted world to renewed and invigorated life. Larks trilled in the sky's limitless dome, kine lowed in the lush pastures or stood contemplative by the marge of river and lochan or knee-deep in the still waters, and farmers' wagons moved leisurely along the field tracks. The intermingling cackling of hens, quacking of ducks, the songs and laughter of farm colleens sounded so cheerful in the freshness of the morning that the commonplace activities of the material world I had so recently left behind were remembered only as a contamination that had been shed and forgotten like a casten garment.

Each warm, sunny noon tide witnessed a gentle drifting into somnolence of this leisurely community, a setting of hoes and scythes against barnyard walls, and a hush that settled soothingly upon the scene like a benediction, and no sound anywhere save the drip of the mossy well or the silvery tinkle of water in dairy or kitchen. The sounds of nature were not hushed—the plop of a trout in the river, the wimble of the burn, the sibilant murmur of the trees—but these sounds fell subdued upon the ear like a lullaby intensifying the summer stillness, soothing humanity to slumber whether on the scented straw of barn and loft or deep in the fragrant grasses by the hedgerows. Then, as the sun went down the heavens, there was a stirring into activity, a barking of dogs, a creaking of wagon-wheels, a whistling in places, a cracking of whips, and a curling of blue smoke from chimneys here and there.

Each morning on awakening I glanced from my pillow through the window to appraise the weather, and each morning I was rejoiced anew in spirit to find the merry sunshine flooding the beauteous scene. It made one feel so happy, as if the trials and tribulations of life in the outside world of grossness and materialism were of no account. Afar, the purple crest of Beinnamaull, ethereal in beauty, lured one out and away on exploration and adventure in this fair new world. By mountain path and moorland track, by riverside and loch, in sheltered vale or on rocky height, in romantic and unexpected places, stood ruined abbeys and monasteries, castles and towers, each with its story rooted

so deeply in the past that it led one in fancy down the echoing corridors of time into an ultimate silence so profound, a peace so unbroken in the remoteness of *eld*, that the glamour of it held one as in thrall of witchery.

Day by day my exploration of this entrancing land broadened in scope till at last I came within sight of the sea—the blue Atlantic rolling westwards to distant climes. The beauty of those sunsets cannot be described, so wild their grandeur in the advancing storm, so gorgeous in the peace of tranquil eventide.

**F**EAR! I have frequently been asked what of all the many evils that menace the peace of mankind would rouse in me the greatest sensation of fear. To that question I have always answered without hesitation—a ghost. There are ghosts; of that there is no doubt. No one knows what a ghost is, where it comes from, or by what power or on what mission it is made manifest to us. A ghost is not a figment of imagination. Though intangible, it exists. In an unguarded moment it invades our presence and stands before us out of the void. The shock produced upon the sensitivity of the beholder by this sudden visitation must needs be baneful. This seems to indicate malevolence of intent. What power do ghosts possess? If malignant, can they do us grievous mental or physical injury? Are they sinister emissaries of the powers of evil? Are they from the pits of hell? Can their touch pollute the flesh, their breath—if breath they have—sear the brain? Can their gaze paralyse, or render dumb or blind? What is a ghost? Yes, in all verity, I dread a ghost. And yet, there are kindly ghosts, ghosts that do not inspire fear, that dawn upon the consciousness gradually like the shimmer of the moon on a gossamer cloud, its sheen and substance slowly increasing. There are kindly ghosts, ghosts that guide the footsteps away from peril, that stay the hand from thoughtless deed.

I had left the little whitewashed inn soon after daybreak, intending to explore the almost forgotten ruins of the 12th-century monastery of Dunnimaghaill, to take rubbings of some of the ancient monumental slabs and inscriptions that were known to exist in the nave, to photograph outstanding features, and, perhaps, to do a little excavational work if time permitted. I had allowed myself only

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three days to do what I wished to do. So, having bundled all essential equipment into the little car, I set out upon my journey to the distant ruins.

On this occasion I was alone, as the outward journey was one of about a hundred miles over bad roads and through country which I had not hitherto traversed—and there might be adventures by the way. As I took the road, that strange feeling of elation that had remained unabated with me was heightened by the charm of the countryside through which the road went, passing by lochan, bog, and moorland, winding on by craggy shoulders of rock, climbing steadily mile upon mile, the scent of peat filling the keen air the while, to swing down again, twisting and turning, into verdant valleys where little thatched cottages reflected from their whitewashed walls the gladness of sun and sky. Few people were visible in all this delectable journey, and when at length the day began to decline towards evening it seemed that I had achieved complete detachment from the last limits of a scanty civilisation and had passed into a region of primeval grandeur and loneliness.

I had scarcely been aware of this feeling of intense remoteness, but as the higher clouds became tinged with the fire of sunset it suddenly assailed me with something akin to a twinge of fear. As the glens began to deepen and darken and the mountains to frown I behought me of shelter for the night. Ordinarily, I would have thought nothing of spending the night in the car or in the heather, wrapped in plaid or rug, but to-night the idea of it raised within me a vague uneasiness that I could ill define. I stood in a little grassy amphitheatre among the darkening hills at a point which, according to my map, tripreading, and compass, was close upon the ruins of the Abbey of Dunnimaghail; but obviously no abbey could ever have stood in such a place, as the mountains crowded around leaving no site suitable for such a building. The metalled road, poor in itself, had long since deteriorated into a rutted track, and in the place where I now stood among heather and bracken yielded to a mere grassy footpath, which petered out entirely a short distance ahead. I had reached a cul-de-sac in the mountains beyond which no advance could apparently be made.

The frown of night deepened on the brows of the hills and their silent hostility seemed

slowly to intensify. I had a curious feeling of being trapped as in the den of a monster of unknown shape which bided its time to advance and devour me. I experienced a feeling of fear, but of what, apart from vain imaginings, I could not well determine. The approach of heavy clouds denoted a storm, the climax, no doubt, of a long period of shimmering heat, but my little car was weatherproof, and I prepared to pass the night as comfortably as possible within its shelter.

IT was at this moment that I discerned for the first time the faintest suggestion of a path, a mere lightness of the turf, that passed behind a massive rock at the far end of the grassy amphitheatre wherein I stood but disappeared on investigation into a labyrinthine maze of rocks, tangled bushes, and undergrowth that all too clearly evidenced complete disuse for many years. But it seemed an indication of a way out. In a few moments I had scaled the brow of a heathy hillock and was astonished at what I saw before me in the deepening gloom. A wide glen opened out beyond the mountains that encircled me and appeared to penetrate for several miles into the fastnesses. The vista was vague and undefined in the dusk, but I saw at no great distance from where I was a considerable mansion of most venerable appearance and, a short distance beyond, protruding its ruined gables above the trees, what was undoubtedly the ancient abbey I had come so far to explore. And yet as I gazed through the approaching night the whole seemed to come and go like a chimera, one moment a ruined tower, an airy gable, the next a loftier clump of trees shaping itself into fantastic forms in the rushing wind.

The hour was not unduly late and, as the night promised to be full of storm, I decided to make my way as speedily as possible towards the old mansion in the throat of the pass. Packing some essential gear into my haversack, I locked the doors of the car, tucked a protective covering over the magneto and carburettor beneath the bonnet, which I clamped securely down, and so left the trusty vehicle to take care of itself till the following morning. Plunging without delay into the hidden glen, and unperturbed by the rain that now began to fall in thundery drops, I made for the old grey house I had glimpsed from my vantage-point above.

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In a few minutes I found myself beside a streamlet on the verge of which distinct traces of a footpath again became visible, and this track I pursued. The dusk deepened and the overhanging foliage increased the gloom. The vague sense of alarm which still possessed me was intensified by the ominous hooting of owls, the menacing bulk of huge tree-boles which crowded upon me, and the increasing anger of the storm. In places the path emerged from beneath the canopy of the trees and passed into open spaces upon the bank of the stream where it twined by mossy boulders and dense clusters of bracken. From one of these verdant spaces I saw before me at no great distance the dark walls of the old mansion, but no friendly light gleamed from its windows.

I was startled to observe in a sudden glare of lightning that the whole structure appeared to be in a completely ruinous condition like the abbey of which it was undoubtedly a still habitable appurtenance. Almost at once I emerged from the trees and stood upon an area of smooth turf that surrounded the rocky eminence on which the mansion rose. Neither light nor sound emanated from it, but I was delighted to note that, contrary to my first impression, the house was quite entire and the occupants—perhaps no more than a caretaker—in all likelihood cosily abed. With some difficulty I made a slow and stumbling perambulation of the house. In spite of the gloom of the night it could be gathered from the style of architecture that the great rambling edifice was one of high antiquity and probably coeval with the ruined abbey, which, as I had earlier noted, was situated in close proximity among the trees.

On returning to the front of the building I was agreeably surprised to find that light was now streaming from a window directly above the entrance. The strange fear that had dwelt within me at once evaporated, and, emboldened by a new light-heartedness, I advanced to the entrance-door and sounded the ponderous knocker. It was scaly with rust and difficult to manipulate and had all too obviously not been used for a very long time. The hollow sound that reverberated throughout the interior of the house was deathlike in its muffled emptiness, and like a knell of doom the doleful echoes died distantly away. So strangely did the sound continue to ring in my ears, a sound that seemed to conjure up the sadness of vanished

centuries, that for some moments I fell into a reverie from which my mind with difficulty freed itself. It was then that I noticed with a start of alarm that a panel of the great studded door had been drawn silently aside and that a dark-hued face, shaded and concealed as by a cowl, regarded me through the opened grate with close and suspicious scrutiny. This secretive and malignant gaze had in it a power that prevented me from making sound or movement and I could not have defended myself had I been assailed. Yet, why should this occurrence so startle me? Why should I fear to be assailed? The violence of the storm was now such that the sound of the opening panel had passed unheard. The obscure figure who stood behind the grate had every right to manifest suspicion of me, a stranger whom he had found prowling about in the dead of night.

**E**VEN as I stood in this perturbed state the heavy door swung fully open and a monk stood upon the threshold beckoning me to enter. Of such sombre hue were his vestments that they seemed one with the darkness that enshrouded him, for the entrance-way was of a pitchy blackness and only a shadowy cowled face seemed to float there before me in the night. Here and there I could distinguish a fold of his cassock, heavy and thick, as though portions of the inky blackness were folded over upon themselves. At this moment a red glow of light appeared within the house as of a distant door partially opened in a passage leading away at an angle from the long, vaulted corridor that led inwards from the entrance. It was a cheerful glow, and the flickering light upon the ancient walls told of a blazing fire within, of warmth, of comfort, of refreshment and repose.

Thankfully I stepped across the threshold and the heavy door closed noiselessly behind me. Almost at once I experienced a sense of disassociation from the outside world of raging wind and lashing rain. Though the anger of the storm was still audible, it faded and was altogether extinguished as I advanced along the corridor. The figure of my guide walked silently before me, darkly silhouetted against the red, increasing glow of the fire, his cowled head and face quite concealed from me and his folded arms deeply thrust into the ample cassock.

The deep peace in which the old mansion

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slept was intensified by its high antiquity, for the vaulted roof above me, the narrow high-arched doorways I passed, with here and there the sombre maws of little corkscrew stairways, clearly indicated an age of hundreds of years. The thickness of the walls, the massiveness of the masonry, the dark old pillars and curving newels brooded in the weight of the centuries they sustained. Each stone seemed locked in the magic spell of hoary age, dumb—yet eloquent, blind—yet vigilant, all-seeing, friendly—yet hostile, waiting, as it were, to grind the hapless pilgrim to dust—yet impotent to do him harm in the restraining spell that bound the whole. Imagined sentinels seemed to stand in each dark nook, their scrutiny intense, yet silent as the tomb in the discipline of the feudal centuries that controlled them. Cruelty seemed everywhere and a great voice petrified into a silence that it fain would break in one all-revealing ravenous roar.

All this I saw and felt as I advanced behind my guide towards the firelit room. The farther I moved into the interior of the house the more the outside world appeared to recede. And, to tell the truth, the more deeply the influence of past ages flowed over me the readier I felt inclined to discard, like an ill-fitting and irksome cloak, the familiar world the heavy door behind me had shut out. At the far end of the main corridor a much narrower passage led off at right angles straight towards the open doorway of a room where, in a huge canopied fireplace, blazed a splendid log-fire. A single tall candle in a massive sconce gleamed upon the table, but the light of the fire rendered this meagre luminant largely unnecessary. Even as I entered the room a line of shadowy figures, cassocked and cowlled and each carrying a tall candle, filed out through a narrow doorway at the far end of the long apartment. They chanted softly as they went, an eerie haunting refrain, and as the last figure vanished from sight the loop that held back the tapestry was unloosed and the heavy curtain fell rustling across the doorway. Only my mysterious guide and I remained in the chamber.

NOT even now did my guide address me, but pointed first to a repast that the kindly brethren had set for me on the table and to a couch that had been prepared for me before the fire. Still under the influence

of a feeling of unreality I thanked him for the hospitality of the house, which he acknowledged with a bow and motioned me to the table. I turned first towards the fire with outspread hands to receive the friendly warmth into my tired frame, and when I rose from my stooping posture I found myself alone in the room.

The apartment was long, narrow, and heavily-beamed, and the massive beetling lintel of the fireplace projected through the wooden roof which, though of great age, was obviously not coeval with the original structure, as was evinced by the huge stone pillars of the vaulting, that sprang at intervals along both sides of the apartment to form and sustain the main roof above. The walls were covered with dark-hued tapestries so old as no longer to show clearly in the flickering light the devices upon them. The floor was strewn with rushes, and the furniture, which relieved the austerity of the chamber, was in harmony with the age and solidity of the mansion. I had stepped out of the 20th century into the Middle Ages and was fascinated by everything I saw. How would the adventure end?

I fell upon the meal with avidity and drank the mead with which my benefactors had provided me. It was now midnight, and the silence that surrounded me was profound. No sound of the storm penetrated these hoary walls and, filled with awe and reverence, I spread my map upon the ample table to ascertain my whereabouts with some degree of certainty. Had I not seen the monks filing from this very refectory, I would have fancied myself quite alone in the great rambling building.

I drew the candle towards me to assist me in my study of the map, but for the life of me I could not determine my exact location. The scanty ruins of the Abbey of Dunnimaghaill were clearly shown, but no building such as that in which I was at present housed was marked. My researches in old books and records had disclosed no reference to this large and venerable house, and yet the historians, antiquaries, and writers whose works I had consulted could not possibly have overlooked such a noble pile as this. Where then could I be? Nonplussed I drew the candle still closer to the map over which I stooped intently with magnifying-glass and compass.

To this day I am none too clear as to what

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occurred at this point—whether my mind had projected itself so far back into the past as to participate in a confused maze of ancient unrecorded happenings, whether I actually dozed for an instant on the table and dreamed a dream, or whether in very sooth I continued all the while in full possession of my waking faculties and saw the vision. It was at the moment of drawing the tall smoking candle more closely to my side that a great wonder and excitement, rising to awed expectancy, filled my whole being, for I saw a beautiful hand and forearm stretch out as from the smoke of the replenished log-fire and seize the candle-sconce that stood by my side. Slowly the great sconce was raised from the table and replaced on the spot from which I had moved it. I gazed intently at the hand, which alone was plainly visible, hoping that the phantom figure would emerge from the mist that appeared to enshroud it, but though for a moment a vague outline seemed to materialise and shimmer before me it was only for a moment, and the whole gradually faded from sight. What could be the meaning, the significance of this occurrence? Glancing upwards at the roof I fancied with a feeling of dread that I saw a flicker of flame run through the age-blackened beams like a will-o'-the-wisp, but it was gone as I gazed.

Puzzled and not a little afraid I replenished the fire, extinguished the candle, and sought refuge in slumber. Sleep closed my eyes almost at once, but the night was full of strange dreams, of figures that glided about me, of men in armour, of abbots, and of one pale nun in particular who stepped directly out of the wall, candlestick in hand, and gazed upon me in my troubled sleep.

The storm must needs have increased in violence, for towards morning, while the night was still of a pitchy blackness, it woke me fully where I lay. The wind, which had been quite inaudible when I entered the house on the previous evening, now raged in audible fury around the staunch old walls and I distinctly heard the creaking of tree branches in travail and the rustling of leaves. What surprised me still more was that the coverlet in which I had lain enwrapped was damp as if with rain or the dews of night. I glimpsed about me from my couch but could distinguish nothing in the darkness, not even the dying gleam of the fire, which was now wholly extinguished. I must indeed have slept long—how long?—and was surprised that I could

not yet catch the glint of dawn. Still drowsy and albeit rather cold I huddled down to await the approach of day and again fell fast asleep. When I awoke, well—

**S**INCE my return from that other world of *eld* and enchantment—just one year ago to-day—I have sought enlightenment in every conceivable direction, if not quite from prince and potentate, at least from peer and peasant, prelate and parson, physician and philosopher, and none can explain to my satisfaction just what it was I stumbled upon that night when all unwittingly I was the guest of—of—well—the monks of the Abbey of Dunnimaghaill. When I broach the subject to my friends—for I cannot erase it from my mind—they look at me askance and become almost rude; some few murmur among themselves and glance at me in a manner I cannot divine; some, the kindest of them, smile and clap me on the shoulders, saying soothingly: 'Why, old man, it simply couldn't have happened. Why, you have been studying too hard among your ancient musty tomes. It will pass, old chap, it will pass.' Their meaning is plain enough, and I resent the implication.

In all my inquiries, and I have delved deep, far and wide, into many an old charter-chest and record-cabinet, library and map-room, only one flicker of light has illumined the darkness that surrounds my strange experience of a year ago. In an obscure district of the mountains of Connemara I made the friendship of an aged and erudite priest of the Roman Catholic church. Steeped in ecclesiastical lore, an antiquary and scholar of repute, he listened to the recital of my tale with rapt interest, muttering from time to time, 'Yes, yes, I follow,' 'Go on, go on!' as he stirred the fire into a merry blaze.

In a few minutes he brought from his cabinet a large map, a very old manuscript, written in a delicate Italian hand, and something else which need not be mentioned. Placing these on a table beside the window he opened the manuscript at a certain page. 'I know that what you tell me is true from beginning to end,' he said, 'for this manuscript, which was given to me some fifty years ago by a student friend at the Scots College in Rome, sets forth much the same experience as your own. It differs in one or two respects, but principally in this—that, on rousing himself from sleep on the morning following his

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arrival at the abbey, he found himself in a ruined arbour by the side of the stream about half-a-mile from the abbey site and wrapped in a cloak which he had never seen before and which obviously belonged to another age than our own. Strangely enough he was thereafter adamant in declining to proceed with his theological studies and subsequently entered the diplomatic service, where he remains to this day in a position of trust and responsibility.

'As you know,' the priest continued, 'a great number of our Irish records have from time to time down the ages suffered ruthless destruction in internecine feuds and wars, and the charters of Dunnimaghaill did not escape in the general holocaust. But, from the obscurity that envelops the history of the abbey, one legend stands out with remarkable clarity. It is to the effect that a renegade nun of Sligo had been seized in guilt with a monk of Dunnimaghaill and had been immured therein amid scenes of unusual horror. In revenge, saith the legend, her guilty paramour contrived to set fire to the abbey and perished with many of the monks in flame and crashing walls. That must be five hundred years ago, and the abbey has remained in ruins since that dreadful night of fire and destruction.

'That is all I can tell you, my friend, but one thing is certain—that the building wherein you were afforded sanctuary from the midnight storm a year ago was none other than the ghostly Abbey of Dunnimaghaill. It is a haunted place where few venture by day and

no man goes by night. If, however, you are bent on returning thither to carry out further investigation, pray let me accompany you, for my curiosity has been deeply stirred anew. I have been there on several occasions many years ago but my interest in the ruined abbey never flags.'

The kindly old priest did indeed go with me to Dunnimaghaill, and I pointed out to him the place where, on the morning following my inexplicable adventure, I awoke to find myself couched in the open beneath a mulberry-bush, wrapped warmly in a cloak of strange texture and design, and apparently still within the building, and close beside the time-shattered remnants of the huge refectory fireplace. Before me, a tall ruined gable pierced the clear blue sky of a faultless summer morning, while birds sang blithely on bush and tree. Around me were grassy mounds, scattered and moss-covered fragments of walls long since collapsed in ruin, where ivy and wild honeysuckle trailed stem and tendon and aged trees spread gnarled roots. It was a scene of picturesque desolation that had remained undisturbed for centuries past.

THAT is my story. Many will doubtless disbelieve it, and I have no wish to impose on their credulity, but I would advise the curious, in all sincerity, though I myself came by no ill, to visit the ruins of Dunnimaghaill in the broad light of high noon and to be well clear of the locality before the evening shadows fall.

## Winter Landscape

*Quiet as memory, quiet as age,  
This winter landscape, calm and sober brown,  
Soothes the tired eye—flat, unredeemed by hills,  
With only the sepia branch spread to assuage  
The green, long acres, furrows glazed with rain,  
And trees that march in dark and mist-drenched miles.  
Only the cattle low by the ragged hedge:  
Only the spattered rooks return to the elms:  
And the wind twists a leaf like a restless hand; its brittle  
Whisper parts the bleached rods of the sedge:  
And the ploughed earth falls apart, like haulms.  
In the weak sunlight, tarnished, yellow as metal,  
And mist exhaling, meadows stir as if spring  
Already pricked the blades for blossoming.*

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH.



## Handmade Neckties

HAROLD WATKINS

NOT long ago a story was published about a man who was so particular about his necktie, and so conservative in his choice, that for forty-odd years he had worn one design, and one only. It was an affair of dark-red flowers on a purple silk background, and about this he was so fastidious that whenever he required a few new ties they had not only to be specially cut and made, but the silk had also each time to be specially woven. And specially woven it was, and still is, in Macclesfield, home of the English handwoven silk industry.

Few of us, I imagine, are quite so obstinate about our neckwear, but most of us have more or less fixed predilections as to colour and design. Some of us like spots, some stripes, and others cheery checks. Some like their ties to be neat, modest, and retiring; others prefer to flaunt a knot of lively, even flamboyant, gaiety. Still, in whatever direction his individual taste may lie, no self-respecting man is entirely proof against the attraction of a well-made tie of good design. Nor, of course, is a woman. There is something about a nice tie.

Time was when the silken cravat, fore-runner of the now universal tie, was an important item in the dress of the dandy, comparable in gaiety of character with the colourful coat and romantic cloak of the years gone by. The silk of hose and cravat of those days was indeed a luxury reserved to the wealthy. To-day it need not be so, for modern machinery has brought the beauties of

silken fabrics within the reach of all, and the necktie in a myriad patterns can be produced mechanically by the thousand. All the more interesting, then, in these days of mass-produced neckwear for the million, is the survival of the exclusive handwoven tie, individually cut and made, for the man of taste, who wants just that little extra which the machine cannot give.

WEAVING is the oldest of all the domestic arts, for its history goes back to the beginning of recorded time, and it has been a handicraft practised as long as civilisation has existed. Nor, like some other ancient crafts, has it been extinguished by the advent of the machine. Here and there the old-time handloom survives. Such places are Macclesfield and, until lately, Spitalfields. After the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 there settled in Spitalfields a colony of French Huguenot refugees skilled in the weaving and embroidery of silk. There, safeguarded by an Act of Parliament passed in the 14th century 'to protect certain old-established silk women against Lombards and other Italians who brought such quantities of silk threads and ribands into the country that the established native throwsters were impoverished,' they found peace to pursue their craft. It is true that there was at first much opposition from these 'native throwsters,' and a petition against the incomers was presented to Parliament, but, as time went on, the

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Huguenots became accepted and absorbed, and added much merit and credit to the English silk trade.

Once the silk-weavers of Spitalfields numbered some 30,000 and English-woven silk and silk embroidery became famous through the length and breadth of Europe. To-day the industry, mechanised and systematised, has moved to other parts, notably Macclesfield, and but a handful of the descendants of those early workers now remain to practise their colourful craft. The product of their ancestral looms still redounds, however, to the fame of their skill, not only throughout Europe, but also in the Americas, where English handmade silk ties and scarves and dressing-gowns are coveted for their perfection.

A flashback to the approbation of English silk in the very highest circles is interesting. In the *Sunday Times* of 31st October 1830 there appeared the following note: 'Her Majesty, some days back, was pleased to intimate to the committee of Spitalfields silk-workers that she desired to see some patterns of the richest and most beautiful silks, that she might select a dress therefrom to wear on the occasion of their Majesties' visit to the City.' And just a hundred years later, in *The Outfitter* of 15th November 1930, appeared another note: 'As a result of the Exhibition of Industries . . . H.M. the King has accepted from the Bethnal Green Chamber of Commerce a selection of Spitalfields Silk Neck-Ties.'

In the West End of London there are still one or two firms remaining of those who have carried the industry through the generations, building up and maintaining the fine reputation of English handmade neckwear. And, make no mistake, there is more in designing and cutting a tie than one might suspect.

**S**ILKS destined for ties are woven in squares, always in the same size—28 by 28 inches. This 'English square' has somehow acquired by custom and tradition a character of its own, apart from being the standard from which two, three, or even four ties may be gracefully and economically cut. 'Made from 28 ins. English Silk Square' is itself a hallmark of quality. For the most exclusive, and expensive, ties it is usual to cut two from a square, in what is technically called seven-fold; or, again, the square will make three,

still perfectly cut, so that they will never ruck or wrinkle, which are rather less expensive, being lined with a separate fabric instead of, as in the case of the 'two out,' providing their own lining.

High-grade ties are almost invariably hand-printed, or hand-blocked, as it is termed. Generally speaking, the printing of fabrics can be classified under three headings—hand-block, silk screen, and roller. For the exclusive tie, however, we need only concern ourselves with the first. Here the art of the master-craftsman adds that extra indefinable something which is lacking in the product of the machine.

The making of the square block that stamps the pattern on the silken fabric and its building up in metal to exactitude from the artist's design, however complicated that may be, is a work demanding infinite skill and patience. Each colour requires a separate block.

These hand-blocks are either 9 by 9 inches or 10½ by 10½ inches, and it is easy to recognise a hand-blocked silk by the slight deviation of the pattern at the edges of each blocking—that is, every 9 or 10½ inches along the texture of the material—for, no matter how expertly the actual impression may be done, there will be some tiny variation in colouring or register which is inevitably recognisable.

And the charm of the designs! From the regular diagonals of the Old School or Regimental to the repetitive horseman in pink of a sporting motif, from a dainty fleur-de-lys, perhaps, to a flowing Paisley or a geometrical check in diminishing parallels, there is that elusive quality of distinction which only certain artists can communicate to a design, and which the machine so rarely maintains in mass reproduction.

Of the cutting and tailoring of one of these exclusive ties there is this to be said—the finished product bears, in its intangible but recognisable way, the same mark of individuality and expertness as does, say, the Savile Row suit, and in the same manner it has made its friends and admirers wherever the clean lines and dignified elegance of English tailoring are appreciated—which is very nearly all over the world. In itself that is, perhaps, to-day a fact of more than ordinary importance, for there is an unfailing demand from New York and Montreal, from Rio and Buenos Aires, as well as from the European capitals, for these superlative items of vestment.

for the well-dressed man. In return they bring us dollars.

Fortunately for us, in another way, not all the ties of handwoven silk have to leave their home country. In the most exclusive shops in London and Edinburgh, and wherever

discerning men buy their haberdashery, may usually be found a selection of neckwear labelled: 'Made from 28 ins. English Silk Square.' For those who like to be called discriminating, handmade ties represent the last word in style, elegance, and good taste.



## ‘Seventy Years Ago, My Darling...’

### GWENDOLINE MATHEWS

SO sighed Tennyson's 'Grandmother,' recalling her heyday. And the Victorian heyday is illumined by a seventy-year-old annual bound volume of a girls' magazine—'For Working Girls—price one penny.' Reading it has awakened curious nostalgia for the tender grace of a day that is as dead as grandmother.

'Soul's Awakening,' by Principal Painter in Ordinary to Her Majesty, illustrates a Jean Ingelow poem. Soul's owner, gazing heavenwards, is, after her own fashion, as easy on the eye as Jane Russell. There resemblance ends.

A serial, by that wetter of Victorian pocket-handkerchiefs, Rosa Carey, and called ingeniously 'Our Bessie,' discovers the heroine guiding and comforting discontented rich girl. My bet is on Bessie for achieving the necessary conversion—particularly as rich girl has a brother, unsuspectingly grooming himself for the part of Bessie's husband.

Lady M. contributes 'The Art of Translating Verse for Music.' Milady marshals her forces, shooting off derivations, firing her big gun, Heinrich Heine. 'Has all this to do with the method of translating? Yea, indeed it has.' Her bombardment would persuade any working girl she was receiving value for money.

'I assume,' says artful author of 'French Soups,' 'that everyone knows vegetables must be properly washed before being used.' From thence we are led gently to 'Soupe aux choux à la Henri Quatre' (to the ignorant, 'another cabbage soup').

More meat, and considerably more entertainment, is offered by Medicus, a bluff character. 'I must premise or tell you,' booms Medicus, 'that this is a working girl's paper, so I have to deal with working girls' troubles.' And deal with them he does, expatiating on 'the engine of the human body,' on vitamins (unchristened), on digestive processes—disposing of ailments in a few well-chosen words. Neuralgia? Obviously, bad teeth. Remedy? Tooth-powder. 'The safest is a little carbonate of soda.' Backache? 'Compound of rhubarb pill, dear girls, will do good.' Likewise, 'a simple roborant plaster may be worn on the loins, and a flannel band round the waist and next the skin. This may be dusted with sulphur for those of mature years.' Sleeplessness, nervousness, depression of spirits, excitability, irritability of temper, pain in legs and feet, burning hands, weakness of the knees, loss of hair, roughness of skin, pimples—all are accommodated in a couple of briskly efficient paragraphs.

Made of sterner stuff than the Radio

## 'SEVENTY YEARS AGO, MY DARLING . . .'

Doctor, Medicus bullies jovially. 'Do not tell me you have no time, or are too tired, else I will have nothing more to do with you. I say exercise daily and regular you shall take, in wind or storm, rain or shine.' (Shades of Mr Rochester. How these Victorian misses liked 'em rough!) 'I know you will want to shirk clear of the morning tub, but I will not permit it,' then weakening slightly, 'unless in very extreme cases.' Remembering how modern columnists lure us to the beauty bath, we begin to appreciate how the English are softening up. After the rhubarb pill, 'a mild tonic of quassia water with dialysed iron and dilute phosphoric acid.' 'Use of dumb-bells ten minutes before breakfast' is confidently recommended. The final assurance, 'If you do all I tell you regularly for six weeks, you will in all probability have completely removed the cause of your trouble,' leaves me all but submissively convinced.

**I**N the serial 'Noah's Ark,' little Eve, aged ten, has, 'God bless her pretty face,' disobeyed Noah. 'Eve,' says doting daddy, 'if you were a boy I should flog you; but I can't strike my little daughter; instead, you shall flog me; take this stick and lay it across my shoulders as hard as you can till I tell you to stop.' Inexplicably, Eve cannot comply with this reasonable request and bursts 'into a passion of tears.' She capitulates, 'her loud sobs accompanying the blows.' One trusts it hurt Noah more than it hurt Eve.

A 'Story for Working Girls,' entitled, happily, 'Eating Rue Pie,' by Ruth Lamb, has this masterly opening. 'I tell you, Milly,' says Richard, 'we shall do first-rate. I saw our manager this morning, and he gave me a pleasant nod as I touched my cap to him.' Richard, you perceive, knows his place. May he not eat too much rue pie before obtaining his deserts (or dessert?).

'Answers to Correspondents' follows. Here, indeed, is riches. Consider first the case of 'Harriet.' 'Harriet should learn to spell before she attempts to write a book for the instruction of poor girls,' writes the editor, crisply dealing with the difficulties of 'an unknown writer' obtaining publication. Aspiring Harriet has obviously over-reached herself.

This editor is past-mistress at wielding the sledge-hammer. 'Black Bess,' unlike her namesake, is unpopular. 'In reply to your

ill-bred letter,' the answer begins uncompromisingly; it ends pulverisingly: 'When answers are given gratis, there can be no question of right and wrong.' Which disposes of Bess.

Theology affords little difficulty. 'One in Need' is warned that 'to pray for wealth rather than essential things, for fame and worldly distinctions, over and above an honourable name, and grace to preserve it unsullied by sin and ungodliness, is to ask what has not been promised, and what might be extremely hurtful to the soul. Try to content yourself in that state of life,' and so forth.

'P.P.P.' foolishly seeks a spanking—and gets it. She 'should not write to single or married men . . . It is a want both of self-respect and of prudence.'

Dietary, bird-fancying, frogs, finance, book-keeping, red nose, strengthening ankles, bad memories, history, poultry-keeping are competently handled; also an affection of the spine (surely poaching upon the preserves of Medicus). Answer to 'Lily' begins frivolously: 'The hair is generally worn at the top of the head at present, but you might continue to wear it with a plait at the back, tied with a ribbon bow,' but ends exhorting Lily 'not to mind frames and feelings in religion.'

Occasionally, little devil Doubt assails Authority, who 'hopes girls will be able to understand' advice proffered. But 'the art of keeping small boys in order during Sunday-school' is simple. 'The great secret,' pronounces Sir Oracle, 'is to make them speak as much as yourself.' This, before the days of modern psychology! Respect for the editor, unwillingly, grows apace.

**T**HREE is a gay number on 'Dress: In Season and in Reason,' where well-covered ladies disport themselves beside the seaside. A 'gored chemise' looks scarcely less fierce-some than its name. 'Service of Beauty' invites, but resolves, alack, into sermonising. 'Men are occupied with the rougher and sterner side of life; women are placed more among its sheltered and softer aspects.' Beyond 'managing her household, as a queen at the head of a little kingdom,' woman's duty is one 'of brightening and beautifying all that belongs to her poorer neighbours . . . In the large department of the service of

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beauty, we find the special privileges and responsibilities of girls.' Knowing our editor, we suspected as much.

She was assuredly nodding, however, when she passed 'A Girls' Cricket Club,' an article sounding the modernistic note. 'We had a cricket match last Tuesday, girls with bats versus men with broomsticks. It was the greatest fun imaginable.' People 'who regard cricket as a most unladylike and improper game for girls' are reassured. 'If girls behave quietly, there can be no serious objection.' The writer would 'like to explain that we knew all the gentlemen very well indeed.' Recollecting the broomsticks, anxiety is relieved.

Novelty introduces Music. 'Sweet Faded Flowers' is an anaemic edition of 'She wandered down the mountain side' and 'Sad blossoms' rest for some unaccountable reason 'there in my tomb.'

'Prize Competition for the Benefit of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen' displays a depressing photograph of a sea-boot stocking, captioned unkindly, 'bad work,' since the ages of competitors range from six to thirty-two. Prizes and carefully graded certificates are lavishly awarded.

Thus it continues. 'Our Bessie' is a nice girl, deserving her rich husband: the story ends—we knew it would—with a double wedding. Masochistic Noah gives his little Eve to the hero, named fortuitously, Adam. Richard, after eating his rue pie like a man, settles humbly and thankfully down to that station of life to which he has been called, and indubitably doffs his cap to the manager's pleasant nod all the days of his life.

'Answers to Correspondents' remains firm favourite. Insects, pests, green teeth, Dr Johnson, the troubles of 'Anxious,' the poetic ambitions of 'Ellinor,' who 'has a certain facility in writing verse, but lacks originality and expression'—all are tackled. 'Miriam May,' grown 'morbid and fanciful,' is admonished: 'Practise personal duties. . . . Teach yourself to write and lay out a course of reading, to strengthen your mind, and give yourself something useful to think about. Do not write any more letters till you know how to do so with pleasure to others.' The editor never once pulls her punches. One breathes a respectful: 'Atta girl!'

'Sweet faded flowers. . . .' But what value for money! 'Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.'

## The Camel and the Floating Sticks

(After La Fontaine)

*So scared was he who saw a camel first  
That he at once skedaddled;  
The second man drew near because he durst;  
And by the third 'twas saddled.  
All things become familiar by routine,  
And what at first seems terrible to view  
Loses its terror when 'tis often seen,  
And only daunts so long as it is new.*

*This brings to mind a parallel occasion  
Concerning certain coastguards who espied  
A ship with dreadful menace of invasion  
Approaching on the tide.  
A moment later it became a barge,  
And in another instant a mere boat,  
Until at last was cast upon the marge  
Nothing but sticks that had been long afloat.*

*I know, indeed, some men of note  
Who bear a strong resemblance to the sticks—  
Imposing when afar; when near, just nix.*

WILFRID THORLEY.



# Appointment for Saturday

JOHN CHESTER

SILIKANA swept the last few yards of the station platform clean and stowed away the broom in the little shed. Then he put on his blue coat. Though at least a couple of sizes too small, the coat showed that he worked for the Government. Giving each button a final rub with his sleeve, Silikana cocked his peaked cap a little farther over his right eye and carefully surveyed both platforms of Empontani railway-station, in Zululand. Clasping his hands behind his back, he strolled along the edge of the platform, humming softly.

'Jim!'

His working name went with the blue coat and the peaked cap, and Silikana hastened to the station-master's office. 'Boss?' he said.

The station-master regarded Silikana thoughtfully. 'Boss Aylng is sick, so you'll have to help me to-day,' he announced at length.

'Yes, boss.'

'You've been here nearly two months. D'you think you can be a bit less of a damned fool just for one day?'

'Yes, boss.' Silikana did not regard the question as offensive. Most white men barked far more often than they bit, and, after all, this

one was the chief of this fine railway-station.

'And if you don't know what to do, don't try to be clever. Come and ask me,' warned the station-master.

'Yes, boss.'

Silikana resumed his stroll. His tall, muscular body would have looked infinitely better naked save for a leopard-skin loincloth. On his left arm he should have carried a black-and-white ox-hide shield; in his left hand a couple of assegais. Loping easily along a Zulu footpath, swinging a knobkerrie in his right hand, chanting an impromptu song of war or of love, he would have closely resembled his grandfather, who, seventy years ago, had led an impi of Cetewayo through Empontani, seeking white people whose blood was to be drunk. Not that Silikana was thinking such foolish thoughts. Boss Aylng had charge of the ticket and parcel offices, and some at least of his duties must fall on Silikana's shoulders to-day. He and the station-master would share the responsibility for the smooth working of the South African Railways for a whole day.

At the end of the platform he turned, his chest straining at the brass buttons. Smiling, he walked across to the weighing-machine,

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removed the canvas cover, folded it, and put it on the window-ledge, just as Boss Aylng did. He could work this machine which showed so cleverly how much a box or a bag of things weighed, and even told how much money was to be paid to the Government for bringing it on the train. Silikana's glance at the cigarette and chocolate machines was elaborately casual. A man could learn to work those in very little time, once he knew about the little hole in which to place money.

'I SEE you, O Silikana!'

Silikana turned quickly at the Zulu greeting. A man and a girl stood, obviously uncertain, at the station entrance. The man he recognised as Shembele, from a kraal about twenty miles away. 'I see you, O Shembele!' he returned. The girl's shy gaze seemed to indicate admiration. 'You may walk on to this platform,' he added graciously.

The girl was young and supple. Her necklaces, bracelets, and anklets were of clean beads, well threaded in neat patterns. The clean blanket draped carelessly over one shoulder made no attempt to hide her firm young breasts, and her round arms and shapely legs glistened with the fat with which she had anointed them. It would require a good number of cattle to pay lobola to the father of such a fine girl, if a man wanted to marry her. Silikana felt a little envious of Shembele as he stepped forward to touch the man's hand.

'The girl is my sister,' explained Shembele. 'I take her on the train to Tegwana.'

Much more pleased now to see Shembele, Silikana touched the hand of the girl, who modestly looked everywhere except at his eyes. Then, very courteously, he corrected Shembele. 'The white man's name for Tegwana is Durban. It is written so on the tickets.'

The girl ventured to look up. 'You can read the tickets, then?' she asked, a shade doubtfully.

Silikana regarded her very seriously. A girl was not usually expected to interrupt the conversation of men. But this was no ordinary girl. She did not look boldly into a man's eyes and laugh without modesty, so he would not boast to her. 'I have been too busy to learn all the tickets,' he admitted. 'Yet, already I know Durban, and Stanger, and Tongaat, and Gollel, and Empangeni.' The girl's eyes grew rounder and bigger as Silikana left her to digest the information.

'You have not left the kraal before?' he asked of Shembele.

'No, and even now I do not go gladly. But there is the tax to pay, and the mealies were few and poor. Thus I go to work on the ships at the Point in . . . Durban, did you not say?'

'It is good work for a man who cannot work on a station,' Silikana conceded. 'And your sister?'

'She goes to visit her sister, who is the wife of a policeman,' replied Shembele. 'She returns on Saturday, and I am troubled. It is a long way to the kraal, and she must go alone.'

Silikana glanced at the girl. Her eyes reminded him of the big liquid eyes of a duiker-buck coming to drink at daybreak. With a wave of the hand he swept away the difficulty. 'On Saturday I finish my work at noon, leaving the white men to take care of the station,' he explained. 'If your sister comes on the early train from Durban, I can see that she walks in safety.'

But Shembele was staring at the chocolate machine. Silikana's eyes questioned the girl. 'Then I shall be happy,' she said softly. 'There would be food, and beer, and a hut to sleep, for the man who brought me safely.'

Silikana made a point he had almost forgotten. 'Your sister's husband, being of the Government, will be paid a pension when he has worked enough.'

'That is so,' the girl agreed.

'We of the railway also have the pension,' he observed.

'That is very good,' granted the girl. Silikana was sure that her voice, low and clear, would never be shrill and irritating.

'Jim!'

Silikana turned to see the station-master, a pencil in one hand, a sheaf of papers in the other. 'Boss?' he said, pulling down the blue coat.

'Switch those points over for the express.' Silikana hesitated. He knew the express, but 'switch' and 'points' were not in the work he had learned. 'At the end of the platform,' shouted the station-master. Then Silikana understood. He had seen Boss Aylng do that many times.

'The white man works with the papers,' he explained to the girl and to Shembele. 'I go to make the railway ready for the express.'

'Get a move on!' roared the station-master. Silikana, smiling, translated this very freely

## APPOINTMENT FOR SATURDAY

into Zulu. 'He says that the work will be easy for me.'

He strode along the platform; then paused to make sure that his friends were watching. He pulled over the lever. Then, to prove that it was no fluke, he pulled the lever back again, and carelessly rested a foot on it. The station-master waved a violent arm. 'Pull it back, you ruddy idiot!' he yelled. Warned long ago to bow to the white man's inexplicable whims, Silikana obeyed. 'Come away from the damned thing!' shouted the station-master.

Good work accomplished, Silikana returned to the platform. 'The white man was angry?' asked the girl timidly.

'The railway is not woman's work,' Silikana replied severely. She looked distressed, and he forgave her. 'We of the railway speak clearly, lest there be mistakes.'

'WE have been here many minutes, yet there is no train,' remarked Shembele, almost criticising. Silikana shrugged his broad shoulders, ignoring the remark.

'Do you know how to buy a ticket for yourself, and for your sister?' he inquired.

'I do not know,' Shembele owned.

'Follow me, and I will show you,' said Silikana, setting the girl at ease. This done, he called Shembele's attention to a poster of Durban, and took the girl aside. 'In Durban many men will desire to speak to you . . . and more,' he observed.

'So I have heard.'

'Some of them will not be men your father would invite to his kraal and offer them his best beer.'

'That, also, I know,' she admitted.

'That is all,' he remarked, relieved. 'A woman should not be spoken to lightly.'

A local train crawled in. Several natives alighted, but no Europeans. 'Collect the tickets, Jim,' ordered the station-master.

Silikana walked on air to the exit. 'You may now learn how we take the tickets,' he called to the girl and her brother.

'Do not crowd like cattle at water,' he warned the natives, as he took the first ticket. Bending it to and fro, he halved it, and handed one piece back to the native, as he had seen Boss Aylng do.

'This is not a ticket to go and to return,' said the surprised native.

Silikana, tolerant by now of ignorant

travellers, smiled kindly. 'Do you teach me my work?' he asked.

'It is only a ticket to go,' insisted the native. 'It is not to be broken.'

'Nevertheless, the Government gives you back one half of each ticket,' said Silikana.

'I think you are a fool,' laughed the native. The laugh ended abruptly as Silikana's hand swept him through the gate and sent him sprawling in the road.

'Does any other man with a wide mouth wish to teach me the law of tickets?' demanded Silikana. There were no volunteers, and out of the tail of his eye he saw the girl watching him read and tear the tickets. Bidding her and her brother follow, he stalked along the platform, carrying the tickets with careless abandon. The station-master, taking them, frowned, eyeing Silikana venomously. 'I ought to murder you, you stupid lump,' he muttered; then laughed. 'Solid concrete from the neck up, aren't you?'

Silikana did not grasp this. Like a good Zulu, however, he realised the danger of asking for an explanation. 'Yes, boss,' he replied cheerfully.

'Weigh this,' ordered the station-master, indicating a heavy box in the doorway. 'It is full of breakables, and if you drop it, Jim, say good-bye to your girl-friend, and beat it, before I really do murder you.'

Smiling, Silikana bent and without strain hoisted the box to his shoulder. At the weighing-machine he paused to elucidate. 'The white man begged me not to set down this box roughly. You shall watch me weigh it.' Setting the box comfortably on his shoulder, he stepped on to the machine, released the catch, and moved the balance-weight. 'You see?' he asked as the arm trembled and then was still. 'Two hundred and eighty pounds, boss,' he announced in the grand manner.

The station-master sighed heavily. 'God help me to get through to-day!' he moaned. 'Go and weigh it again, you . . . Go on!' he bellowed.

Silikana mounted the scale once more.

'Hell's bells!' groaned the station-master, watching from the office door. He strode down the platform, spoke with concentrated venom to Silikana, weighed the box himself, and returned, a seething volcano, to his office.

'You see?' said Silikana airily. 'On this station we both weigh, so that no mistakes are made.'

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A SOUTH-BOUND train clanked in and stopped. 'There are tickets to be taken again,' announced Silikana, making for the exit.

'No, you don't!' called the station-master. 'Stop them at the gate until I come.'

The girl looked puzzled, but Silikana smiled her doubts away as he shepherded the natives and the Indian coolies against the fence. 'The chief of this station is a good chief,' he explained. 'Some would make me do all the work, but not this one.'

As he spoke, the door of a compartment at the rear of the train burst open. A burly Basuto sprang out and sped along the platform. A white policeman, followed by a Zulu police boy, leaped from the compartment in pursuit. Silikana kept his interest in the chase well in hand. This was a matter for the Basuto and the police only. A wise man would not interfere, lest he be taken to the court and asked many foolish questions, and made to say repeatedly, like a stupid child, what the policeman already knew.

The Basuto hesitated for a split-second near the exit. Suddenly he snatched a sugar-cane knife from a loosely-tied bundle lying on the platform and slashed at a native who made a half-hearted attempt to stop him. The heavy, murderous weapon whistled past the native's ear, leaving him grey-faced with sudden terror. Six inches to the left and the knife would have halved his head to the chin.

Silikana frowned at a thought which came slowly. The man was actually brawling on the station; creating an uproar on the platform of which he, Silikana, was practically in charge. And, crime almost unbelievable, he had stolen a knife for which he, Silikana, was responsible until the Indian storekeeper came and paid the necessary money to the Government. This was sheer insolence, particularly from a mongrel of a Basuto.

'Your stick, O Shembele!' he called, as the Basuto smashed open a gate in the fence and ran through. Silikana winced; this further sacrilege infuriated him. 'I will teach this low-born Basuto to steal and to break Government property.' Swinging the heavy stick to feel its weight and balance, he went on his toes with long, loping strides after the Basuto.

'Come back, you fool!' yelled the white policeman, following. 'The man's a killer! I'm going to shoot if he doesn't stop.'

'Have a care, O Silikana!' cried the girl, and Silikana laughed in sheer joy. Something

inside him groped back through his father and his father's father, back to the days of Tsaka, when a Zulu was a man and a warrior. He began to sing softly, then more loudly, of his own prowess. He did not sing as a boaster, but as a man stating a fact about to be proved. Twice he leaped into the air, uttering a war-cry, such as he yelled when he flung off his clothes and danced at his kraal when meat and beer were plentiful. He laughed again as the Basuto made an error, ran into an angle formed by two fences, and turned at bay.

'Do you also wish to be killed?' snarled the murderer.

'Do I hear a rat squeaking?' Silikana taunted him.

'I have killed a white woman and a dog of a Zulu policeman who tried to take me,' boasted the Basuto.

Silikana, his stick whistling and hissing about his head, stepped softly nearer. 'Were they both asleep?' he asked with elaborate irony. Then, fiercely: 'Put down that knife, O man born of a rat and a reptile in a kloof!'

Screaming curses, the Basuto sprang forward, swinging a sweeping blow with the heavy knife. Swaying backwards and sideways from the hips, Silikana evaded the blow. This monkey of a man would have to be taught the difference between a Basuto and a Zulu. And the blue coat and the peaked cap, the property of the Government, must not be cut. He threw off the cap and slipped out of the coat with amazing swiftness, not conscious as he did so that he had begun to stamp his bare feet on the hard ground. 'This is now a fight, you son of a baboon and a diseased jackal,' he announced.

'Stand aside!' shouted the white policeman.

'Please, boss!' pleaded Silikana over his shoulder. 'This thing has insulted me.'

The Basuto, now frantic, lunged with the knife. Silikana, ducking, swaying, incredibly light on his feet, tapped the Basuto with the stick on the head, on the shoulders, on the legs. 'In my kraal are girls who could fight such things as you,' Silikana jeered, leaping over a sweeping blow of the knife, which would have cut through his knees. He feinted at the Basuto's head. Up went the latter's arms to guard, and the stick took him heavily in the ribs, driving the breath from his body. A swift change of feet, and up came the stick to strike beneath the Basuto's elbow, sending the knife in a flashing arc high over the fence. Leaping forward, Silikana grabbed the yelling

## TEA LIKE WINE

Basuto by the shirt and shook him until he hung limp, gasping and sobbing.

Turning, he thrust him forward to the white policeman; then picked up his cap and coat. The Basuto was handcuffed to the police boy, and the little procession started for the platform.

THE white policeman thanked Silikana until the latter squirmed with embarrassment. 'It was not a good fight,' he said. 'And no man may steal Government property while I, Silikana, have charge of this station.'

A gaping crowd met them at the end of the platform, the girl and Shembele well to the fore. 'Nevertheless,' said the white policeman, 'there will be a Government letter and a reward for the fine thing you have done.'

Silikana pulled his peak cap a little farther over his right eye. Government letters and rewards were well enough in their way, but something more important was still vague. 'To speak again of Saturday . . .' he began.

'That was a fine thing which you did,' said Shembele.

'Even of his knife you were not afraid,' added the girl.

Silikana snapped his tongue in a full-blooded Zulu click. 'It was a small thing,' he declared with finality. 'It is now finished. The train on Saturday leaves Durban at six o'clock.'

'I come on that train,' whispered the girl.

'That is good,' said Silikana, hugely relieved. 'Now I will show you how to get a good seat in the train. Then I go to find the knife which the misbegotten Basuto stole.'

A perfect gentleman, he did not stare at the girl as she stood framed in the window of the compartment. 'Go sweetly, O girl!' he called as the train pulled out. He was still watching a waving hand as he stepped with a heavy foot into a basket of pawpaws, reducing the fruit to pulp.

'Holy snakes!' moaned the station-master. Then, with almost superhuman forbearance: 'Jim, if we had a battleship on this station, could you break that?'

But Silikana knew the answer to most of a white man's questions. 'Yes, boss,' he replied, very seriously.



## Tea Like Wine

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J. M. AITKENHEAD

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THEY tell me—that is, my mother's people—that I once saw my great-grandmother of Ladyhill in Antrim; that she took me, an infant of months, in her arms and showed me around—and her ninety-two! Of course, I don't remember, so I don't know; but I do know I have enough of the Irish in me to believe she blessed me that day and to hope that her blessing took.

However that may be, Mary of Ladyhill

had such a name for her butter that she could have a penny more per pound than anyone else at the Antrim market—and of all her descendants none makes butter but myself. She had a reputation for something else. She could make tea like wine, they said—which was saying something, in Ireland, for, as everyone knows, none but the best tea will sell in that island, and the poorest peasant there will not stint where his tea is concerned.

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I have seen Irish 'tattie howkers' in Ayrshire, in rags and tatters, and 80 per cent of their bill to the travelling grocer's van was for tea. They ate potatoes, and drank tea, and talked. What talk—and what tea!

THIS is how Mary Smith made her tea—and to my knowledge it has never been written down before. I had it from my mother, who had it from hers, who, as the stranger bride at Ladyhill, had it from her mother-in-law—and, my word upon it, it is another drink, and fit indeed to be compared with wine.

I daresay it was always on a peat fire the original brew was made, but I can vouch for the results on a fire of wood or coal, and on a gas flame, and doubtless it would even work on an electric hotplate, though I have a feeling that these cold-looking grey discs seem all wrong for a homely, intimate job such as this.

First of all, then, this is *pan* tea. No kettle, no pot—just the one small blackened pan. Second, only two people can share the brew; only enough for two people can be made at once. Potheen, no doubt, was the drink when there were bigger numbers at Ladyhill—and a lot less trouble. The idea of a big teapot must have been sacrilege to a connoisseur like Mary. As for the urns of scalding steam-shot brown water in cafés, it is a blessing she never saw the things. Third, only Indian tea with a good name. Mary bought hers from a merchant who came to her door, and sometimes she traded a bit of linen. Fourth, fresh well-water should be used; but if all you have is a spigot, poor creature, what comes out of that (the cold one) will do—only, have it fresh.

Now you can begin.

PUT about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups of water in your pan and set it on to boil with no lid. Sit down to watch it, and have beside you the tea-caddy, and, in a cup, just the smallest amount of your cold water. You'll enjoy watching the water moving, and then the first wee tiny bubbles coming—but don't wait for

the big bubbles. Just when the water's breaking up, drop into the pan, twice, what your five finger-tips can lift of tea. This will spread a mask over the whole surface, and for just a moment put the water off the boil. You'll just have time to put up the caddy and lift up your cup with the few drops of cold water, when, pop through the mask, the water boils. On the instant, lift the pan off the fire and into it pour the cold water. The mask is dispelled, sunk—and the loveliest amber liquid is clear in your pan, while there assails your nostrils a perfume you've most probably never known.

Now put your pan down beside, not on, the fire. You'll just have time to lay two cups and saucers, sugar and cream. The consistency of the latter is quite important—it's presence essential. If 'the top of the bottle' is the best you can do, fair enough, but don't use tinned cream or milk. In Mary's words, I understand, the best cup of tea was made, other things being equal, with a spoonful of cream 'that had to be helped out of the pourie.' And no nonsense about 'the milk in first.' Your sugar and cream are on the tray beside your cups, and the lot you deposit near the fire, between your friend and yourself. Then into the gleaming china you pour, steaming, the bonniest amber-coloured brew of tea. It will drain the pan to fill your two cups. Now your sugar and cream to taste, and if, like Mary, you have, to offer your friend, a scone of your baking that morning, with butter of your churning that day—sure, you wouldn't call the king your cousin.

AS I have said, I couldn't in the nature of things know my great-grandmother, in the ordinary sense. I can't remember her. But I reckon she was an aristocrat. I have a portrait, a photograph. She isn't smiling. How many people to-day can be photographed without smiling, almost grinning? Only those with something to them. They don't need to smile to impress you, or beguile you. They have so much in themselves. Mary would have many skills on the level of her tea-making. She lived to be ninety-two. They tell me, too, she smoked a pipe.



## How I Write Thrillers

JAMES CORBETT

I FIND it difficult to lay down an arbitrary rule for the writing of a modern thriller, and I have realised for a great number of years that every author has his or her own particular way of going to work. As I happen to have written seventy-six of these thriller novels, perhaps I may feel justified in explaining my own method of procedure and in passing on to younger writers the benefit of my experience.

I fell a victim to the disease of writing when I was no more than thirteen, and just when I arrived at that age I had my first short story, 'A Turf Romance,' published in a Northern Ireland paper. I received for that modest effort the stupendous fee of half-a-guinea, and I felt so excited by the thrilling event that I rushed immediately into the street and purchased no less than three dozen copies of the publication.

After returning from service in the First World War I started the business of writing in grim earnest, but before then I had earned well over a hundred pounds in short story competitions in various papers throughout the country. It was necessary, of course, to secure some regular bread-and-butter employment to keep me going financially, and I found five years in a lawyer's office and five years in a world shipbuilding firm very helpful indeed in giving me a wide experience of human nature.

From the very beginning of my literary career I determined that I should never indulge in mental worry over the writing of a thriller novel, and I am glad to state that I have

steadfastly kept to that resolve ever since. I mention that point specially, because a good number of thriller authors allow a plot to simmer in their minds for months, then by some special burst of effort they transfer it to paper, after having all the details thrashed out in advance. I have no objection at all to this plan of campaign, except that personally I should regard it as a tragic waste of valuable time, and if I had to write within a definitely prescribed formula or design I should die in a few months from sheer inertia and boredom, or be transferred to some hospital for the mentally incurable!

Instead of worrying myself to death over a thriller plot, I sit calmly down at my typewriting machine and type out the first chapter, and from that stage I proceed until the final chapter is reached. In other words, I trust to my own imagination to furnish me with ideas, and perhaps I rely on some kind fairy at the bottom of the garden to help me out of a complicated problem when the ordinary mortal might be thinking of self-destruction! Indeed, I often reach the penultimate chapter of a novel before discovering the identity of the killer, and there are times when I am as completely astounded at the ultimate dénouement as is the reader himself. I admit, of course, that I carry a skeleton of the plot somewhere or other in my head, but, if I do, this is entirely a subconscious process and certainly it never affects my sleep at night. As I awake each new day with a whole crop of ideas, I can only conclude that the sub-

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conscious part of me goes on working steadily throughout the night.

MY working hours are from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., with a slight interval for breakfast and lunch. In the afternoon I treat myself to a six- or ten-mile route-march on prescribed military lines, without the pack, and I keep the evening hours for revision, amendment, and the rereading of my script.

Emerson once advocated that every human being acquire a plan of self-knowledge, and I have discovered that the maximum number of quarto pages I can write at a single sitting is exactly four. If I attempted more than that amount it would mean shoddy work, with a tired brain, and I should have to rewrite the stuff from start to finish and curse myself heartily into the bargain. No, after completing the definite number of four quarto pages on my typewriter I turn to the radio or take up a book, or have a brief glance at a newspaper, or indulge in a chat with one of the family circle, then back to the task of writing my thriller. It can, therefore, be seen that I rely more on perspiration than inspiration, and if I did not maintain this system of ruthless self-discipline I should be wandering hopelessly about from pillar to post—and thinking of putting an end to myself at any moment!

As regards stimulant, I have been told that my old friend Edgar Wallace frequently drank forty cups of tea in a single day, but whether that is correct or not, I content myself with a modest cup of coffee at 11 a.m. As I find the writing of modern thrillers a tremendous drain on nervous energy, I have purposely been a teetotaller all my life, and I cut smoking out more than two years ago.

My own favourite thriller author is the famous E. Phillips Oppenheim, and while I occasionally glance at the novels of Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie I still hold that no woman is logical enough to write a competent thriller. I keep abreast of all kinds of fiction, and like to turn up at a good film in order to get ideas, but my chief dread of the cinema is the waste of three or four hours of precious writing time.

Incidentally, if any of my intellectual friends turn up their noses at thriller writing, I always remind them, with a touch of pride, not to mention secret satisfaction, that for five years I wrote for the distinguished *Fortnightly*. As a matter of truth, writing a modern thriller is

now considered a genuine artistic task, and I am ready to defend that view against anyone.

I can turn out an 80,000-word thriller in ten days, but what I count my best novel, *Devil-Man from Mars*, took me ten months to produce. I like to spend three months on a thriller novel, and even a complete year if I am not rushed by my publishers, but as a general rule I can turn out thrillers at high speed. On four occasions I wrote four thrillers at once, and am glad to say that I had all sixteen novels eventually accepted. I had to take exceptional care not to get all the plots hopelessly mixed up, but I always avoid a catastrophe of that kind by using a loose-leaf notebook in which I enter all minor details. If I have described the heroine as being the owner of two magical blue eyes, it would be highly embarrassing for the author if those eyes changed colour during the night!

I make a point of reading my stories to my own family circle, and if I discover the members spotting the identity of the killer in advance, or getting wise to some particular angle of the plot, then by a deft twist I try to lead those critics gently up a side-street. Incidentally, there is nothing like candid criticism from your own fireside, and when the members of your family have you wriggling uncomfortably in the chair they realise in a flash that their shafts have hit the mark.

As the great majority of my thriller fans are of the gentle sex, I always introduce a fairly strong love and romantic interest into my novels. Further, I never descend to sordid details of crime in my stories, and all my books are suitable for family reading. I aim always at action, logic, and probability, and the suspense has to be continuous from the first paragraph. The plot must be fast-moving, with gripping incidents, and the story as such is more important than characterisation, though the characters, too, must pass muster.

A thriller can be a spy yarn, an escape story or it can deal with the underworld of crime or with thrilling adventure. Most of my stories come under the Secret Service category. There is, however, a vital distinction between an ordinary thriller and a detective story. In the thriller one can allow the detective to rely a good deal on intuition, and generally the problem is: 'Who committed the crime?' while in the detective story the perpetual query is: 'How was the crime committed?' A

## HOW I WRITE THRILLERS

thriller goes all out for sensation and excitement, but a detective yarn must approach closer to life and reality. A good thriller plot is larger than life-size, and it must be colourful, padded with incident, and have plenty of speed.

I like to limit the number of my suspects. I have to remember that my reader may be feeling half-dead after a strenuous day at the office, and if I bother him with a mass of unnecessary detail the chances are that my novel will be hurled out of the train window and that this particular reader will never purchase another book by the same author.

I have written a good number of detective novels among my thrillers, and when I build up a plot for the more intellectual type of detective reader I invariably bear in mind that the story must be probable. I have to convince the reader from the first page that the whole thing could really have happened.

I also endeavour to write my stories in such a way as to achieve unity of design, and the reason for rejection of a vast number of scripts is because the thriller does not hang together, while often the weakness of the book is a most unconvincing motive. I have received quite a few rejection-slips for short stories, but I am happy to state that all my thriller novels have been eventually accepted and published. I have had to revise, amend, and delete according to publishing requirements, but I have never been wholly satisfied until I had all my novels taken. I hate to go to bed any night without having completed one chapter of what I am at, but obviously there are occasions when I have to rewrite my script several times before I am fully satisfied.

I find it imprudent to begin a thriller with a murder already committed, so by introducing the victim to the reader in advance I attempt to add to the interest and dramatic tenseness of the story. Also by this plan I find it easier to bring in the suspects, and I am enabled also to pay greater attention to clues, the entire story so becoming more vivid and real. I generally furnish the reader with clues as soon as they reach the detective, but of course I do not allow the reader to know what the mastermind is thinking.

The most important parts of a thriller are the beginning and the end. The ending must develop naturally out of the beginning. A good ending must solve the riddle, make clear how the crime was committed, show who is

the guilty party, clear up all loose threads, and deal satisfactorily with each of the important characters. The ending must seem inevitable. It has to be dramatic and sensational. The thriller is not a love story, and the happy ending is not always imperative. A girl, for instance, may find she has been in love with a killer, but as the man has to pay the penalty of his crime—either by self-elimination or on the scaffold—the happy ending would be ridiculous in such a case. In any event, the girl can readily be compensated with a new romance. I never overload the ending with a mass of unnecessary detail, making each explanation short and concise, and going all out for a workmanlike finish. A slick ending is essential, but it is never wise to rush the finish before one has cleared up all the points. The reader must not be left befogged or disappointed, and he must put down the story with a firm resolve to purchase my next thriller, so, with this in mind, I try hard to achieve an original, streamlined, and convincing finish.

**T**ITLES are vitally important, and if you take a glance at a modern bookstall you will note how thriller titles are arranged to catch the eye. Often a title is indispensable in selling the book, so it must be bang up-to-date and arresting. Here are a few of the titles I chose for my books: *Devil-Man from Mars*, *Her Private Murder*, *The Man with Nine Lives*, *Murder While You Wait*, *The Ghost Plane*, *The Merrivale Mystery*, *Death Comes to Fanshawe*, *Rendezvous with Death*, *The Air Killer*, *Red Dagger*, *Dancing with Death*.

I find most publishers like a thriller novel to run to about 80,000 words, and there is a definite reason for that length. It is the length approved by the modern public library, and publishers depend on the libraries for a large proportion of their sales. Work it out for yourself. If each free library buys one 8s. 6d. thriller, then multiply that figure by the number of libraries in Great Britain.

I invariably try to create one humorous character in my novels. He may be a stooge, a live-wire, the detective, or a colleague of the investigator, who is for ever making mistakes. Indeed, I find it imperative to keep a steady vein of humour throughout my stories.

I type all my own novels, and it may interest readers to learn that I have always used the same typewriter. It may also amuse them somewhat to hear that I have only paid six

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shillings for a solitary repair item to that machine, but that is because I make a point of carefully brushing the typewriter, 'the author's piano,' from ten to fifteen minutes before sitting down to work. After that it is a labour of love. Frankly, I have never been able to dictate stories to a lady secretary, or to copy Edgar Wallace and recite my yarns into a dictaphone. I prefer concentration and being at ease to think at all cost, but then, as I have already stated, every author has his or her own method of manufacturing these thrillers.

Certainly I have never been guilty of writing down to a reader. I treat my thriller fans as intelligent human beings and try to put myself in their place. As I finish each chapter I ask myself the following questions: Has the reader's attention been caught and held? Have I jumped quickly enough into the action? Has my story drama, mystery, suspense, and does it flow along without any perceptible break? Is the crime sufficiently novel? Have I planted a suitable number of red herrings—not so many that the reader will be irritated but enough to throw him off the track? Does my story lead the reader up the garden by telling the truth in such a manner as to cause an intelligent individual to draw false conclusions? Does the story contain more than one kind of conflict—does it conflict with another character, with self, or with certain circumstances? Does the climax arise naturally from the preceding incidents, and is the plot shaped in a logical manner? Do the protagonist and antagonist appear face to face

often enough to keep things moving, and are there plenty of predicaments? Does the dialogue say something essential to the story? Has it life? Is there enough dialogue to suit the market, and does it suggest character? Is the story told with intensity? Are all my technical details accurate, and does the setting and general layout help to put the story across to the reader? Is all matter relevant to the story, and have I read human nature correctly? Is each chapter ending significant and dramatic, and is the ending really exciting and satisfying? Having answered all these questions satisfactorily I breathe a fervent prayer of gratitude for that fairy at the bottom of my garden.

I AM occasionally stopped in the street and asked how I have got away with so many murders without having been arrested by Scotland Yard, and in reply to these kind questioners I always say that I am keeping my fingers double-crossed and that—so far as my personal knowledge goes—even my finger-tabs have not been copied at the Whitehall department of the Yard!

I chat to people in all walks of life—police-men, spivs, dope addicts, bus conductors, all kinds of racketeers, including modern politicians, and listen carefully to all their remarks, and in this manner become conversant with as many aspects of human nature as possible. I can never know too much about people, and little do some of those individuals suspect that their exact peculiarities are often copied into my book-characters.

### Coronemus nos rosis antequam marcescant

*Come, let us crown ourselves with early roses  
Before the banquet of our life is over;  
Red wine the chrysolite of youth encloses  
And thirsty are the lips of loved and lover.*

*With divers fruits the table has been laden,  
Anticipating taste with tempered greed,  
Each man Apollo, Venus every maiden,  
Waited upon by rosy Ganymede.*

*With roses let us crown ourselves, and after,  
It matters not since youth returns no more:  
Only the dawn, and ghosts that have no laughter,  
And Time that sweeps the garlands from the floor.*

S. THOMAS ANSELL.



## *Boswell*

### Memories of a Travelling-Bag

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GEORGE T. HAY

**I**F Boswell had still been in my possession I should this year be celebrating his centenary with the respect due to him as an heirloom. But he has long gone, and now I can merely look back and lament his going.

This Boswell was a leather travelling-bag (in our family circle always given masculine gender) bought in a Perth saddler's shop in 1851 by my paternal grandfather, a Kinross-shire farmer, and christened by him not after the famous Laird of Auchinleck—of whom or of Doctor Johnson he had never been known to speak—but after the maker whose name-plate was fixed in the bag's interior. At the buying, the saddler of Perth claimed that Boswell was the last word in elegance and of a type being then displayed with great success at the Crystal Palace itself. As a fact, to later eyes Boswell had a stocky rather than an elegant look, being about two feet long, eighteen inches high, and twelve inches wide, and in his make-up a typical, massive Victorian. His light-brown leather was, by modern standards, of unbelievable thickness, his brass lock was solidity itself, and his handle was strong enough to lift a modern

cabin-trunk. Inside he was lined with a fine-quality linen unaccountably dyed a vivid red, and, although he looked small, Boswell had an astounding cubic capacity, which tempted his owners consistently to overload him, with disastrous effect in later years on his figure.

My grandfather paid for this excellent bag one pound seven shillings and sixpence, with one shilling and sixpence extra for a tight-fitting cover of grey corded material, to protect Boswell's surface in accordance with Victorian ideas of thrift, and a further sixpence for the stamping in black letters of his initials, G. H., alongside the lock. The buyer considered Boswell to be a luxury production and would, if he had been by himself, have chosen something cheaper, but his wife, a determined young woman, having fallen in love with Boswell at first sight insisted on his purchase.

For the next sixteen years Boswell accompanied my grandfather on the increasingly lengthy journeys which even conservative farmers were being tempted into taking by the wonderful new railways. Recorded expeditions were to the great Falkirk Tryst

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for sheep, cattle, and horses, each October, then still flourishing and still being fed by droving from even a hundred miles away; to the pioneering shows of the Highland and Agricultural Society, where one might see, besides pedigree stock yearly finer in quality, amazing new agricultural implements; to farming relations as far afield as Banff and the Borders, visited previously rarely even once in a decade. There were, too, frequent shopping-excursions, at his wife's instigation, of course, to Edinburgh, now astonishingly easy of access by train and the Burntisland-Granton steam-ferry. Once, indeed, it looked as if Boswell, like the celebrated one, was to adventure to London, when his owner planned to visit a younger brother who had gone pioneering there in 1840 after completing his apprenticeship with a Dunfermline baker. This brother was now flourishing in North Audley Street as, to quote his business card, 'Purveyor of rusks, hot morning-rolls, and fancy breads to the Aristocracy and Gentry.' The idea was, however, given up after much discussion, my grandfather firmly refusing to abandon his farm for the three whole weeks which his wife insisted would be required to make the journey worth while. Thus it was not until thirty-four years later that Boswell reached the Metropolis. Long before then he had changed ownership.

THE change of ownership took place in 1867. In that year my father, having fulfilled his indentures with the Lansdowne Estates (his father was a Lansdowne tenant), set out to take up an appointment in the Conon office of Sir Kenneth Mackenzie of Gairloch, brother of Osgood Mackenzie, author of the fascinating *A Hundred Years in the Highlands*. To celebrate the important occasion my grandfather presented him with Boswell.

Going far into the Highlands was then still something of an adventure for ordinary folk. The Highland Railway had been completed to Inverness only four years earlier, and people, recalling the not very distant dreadful experiences of stage-coach travellers in the wild Drumochter Pass into Badenoch and on the bleak moors of Dava beyond, were not entirely assured of the safety of a railway in such a storm-swept country. To sustain him, therefore, on his journey through these deserts—although it was April, snow was still

deep on the Grampians—my father filled a considerable part of Boswell with food and drink. He found ample room, in addition, for a Bible and a New Testament, books on estate management, and also a brand-new one on water-colour painting, in which he had acquired considerable skill in estate-architecture work. The new book, however, dealt with landscape, for my father was keen to try his hand at Highland scenery, then very popular, following the Queen's example, with many amateur painters. There were also packed into Boswell survey instruments, toilet requisites, including the indispensable Macassar-oil, and various brushes, one specially for my father's youthful but bushy moustache and side-whiskers. Another very important item was a heavy flannel night-gown of a set made for him by his mother as protection against the notorious Northern cold. Conon my father found, to his surprise, to have a milder climate than Kinross, and Conon House gardens to be productive of fruits and flowers undreamt of on the shores of Loch Leven.

Besides Boswell my father's luggage consisted of a large oak trunk on which, by parental instructions, he was to keep a strict eye at each of the junctions at which he was to change trains—Ladybank, Perth, Stanley, Forres, and Inverness. His parents must, indeed, have thought Highlanders to be giants if they expected them to walk away undetected with such a massive chest. Boswell he was to keep beside him. There were no luggage-racks in the Highland Railway's austere third-class compartments, which in those days were open saloons with low-backed, uncushioned seats as uncomfortable as the pews in a country kirk.

The journey from Kinross to Inverness lasted from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.—amazingly quick and comfortable compared with the expensive mail-coach's weary thirty-six hours of less than a couple of decades before. As the train penetrated north of Blair-Atholl my father was given the impression of being in a different country, not only by the desolate, unfamiliar landscape, but also by the Gaelic, equally unfamiliar, spoken by practically all the passengers who came aboard at the tiny, isolated stations. The behaviour of these passengers seemed to confirm the stories of the Highlanders' excessive love of whisky, for at frequent intervals a bottle was passed round and everyone except my father drank

## BOSWELL

from it directly and copiously. Much voluble Gaelic accompanied not very friendly looks on his repeated refusal to have a dram.

At Inverness travellers had to pass the night, the last train of the day to Dingwall having left hours before. A fierce-looking, bearded porter offered to take my father's trunk to an inn on Castle Hill, and the two set out with a barrow. Boswell, however, was carried by my father himself. The porter was talkative and pointed out with pride the numerous fine new streets which were then springing up all around the station. Union Street in particular he considered as good as Edinburgh's Princes Street any day. He himself was an old soldier and had seen many cities, he said, but never one to beat his native Inverness. He had been through the Mutiny and two Frontier wars as well. Had my father, a big, strong lad, never thought of taking the Queen's shilling, he asked, with the Froggies and their new Napoleon threatening to start another war. This idea of his becoming a soldier amused my father greatly. Young men of his day with promising careers before them might join the Volunteers, but they certainly did not contemplate laying their bones on the battlefields of Europe.

My father found that the Conon part of the Mackenzie property had fine arable farms like the Lansdowne ones, but that the greater part of the estate lay in Wester Ross, a country of crofters and fishermen and of vast bleak moors and mountains. These western lands had previously yielded little revenue, but now with moors and mountains much sought after for grouse-shooting and deer-stalking they were gold mines. Between Conon and this western part there was therefore much going and coming and my father had to make the journey frequently. The new railway from Dingwall to Strome Ferry, opened in 1868, took him as far as Achnasheen. After that there was a not very good road the length of Loch Maree to the Mackenzie mansion at Gairloch, and this road had to be travelled on horseback, Boswell as a saddle-bag. For such work Boswell was not suited. He was too lumpy and swung wildly and uncomfortably even at a gentle trot. But he had one invaluable quality—he was impervious to wet. Thus in years of soakings by the soft but penetrating rains of the west coast he never let in a drop of water. True, he did acquire one dark and permanent stain on his red-linen interior, but that was not from Gairloch rain,

but from an accident on a New Year's journey of 1878 home to Kinross. 1878 was one of the worst winters ever remembered in the Highlands, and in Badenoch in particular, through which my father had to pass, fierce blizzards followed one another for months on end. In such a blizzard his train was snow-bound for thirty-six hours just north of Drumochter summit and conditions in the bare compartments were torturing, for the only heaters, metal foot-warmers put in at Kingussie, went stone-cold almost before the train stopped. My father had two travelling rugs and plenty of food, but a piercing draught from the compartment floor made things almost unbearable, and to keep himself warm he emptied Boswell and put his feet inside. But he had inadvertently left a brandy-flask in the bottom of the bag, and this his weight promptly cracked, and the smell of the oozing liquid filled not only his compartment but also the neighbouring ones, so that when the train finally got going several passengers came along at the first station to have a look into the compartment whose sole occupant they obviously expected to find dead-drunk.

IN those days Boswell passed through Badenoch many times, but it was not until 1886 that he first broke a journey there when my father came courting a sheep-farmer's pretty, fair-haired daughter. He and she were married in 1889 and Boswell, of course, was part of the bridegroom's luggage. The other pieces, a handsome portmanteau in the latest style and a dashing tile-hat box, were, however, more in keeping with my father's new position as factor for the Novar estates in Ross-shire than was Boswell, then in his thirty-eighth year and still wearing his corded cover.

After the wedding ceremony, which was held at the bride's home at the foot of the Monadhliaths, the newly-married pair set out for Kingussie, 9 miles away, there to join a south-going train. But half-an-hour after they had gone it was discovered that, while all the grand new luggage had been put in their gig, Boswell had been overlooked. The best man, my father's farmer-brother, was appalled—he knew that Boswell contained, among other necessaries, the bridegroom's elegant wedding nightgown. And so a gig-horse, accustomed to being ridden, was forthwith saddled and the best man went off at the gallop in tail-coat and top-hat with Boswell

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strapped to his back. He reached Kingussie, his horse soaked in sweat, as the train was steaming in and was furious at the couple's complete ingratitude to him. They were too much in love, he reported indignantly afterwards, to notice whether they had any luggage at all.

On this journey Boswell did reach London and stayed at the house of Uncle William, the baker of North Audley Street, who after forty-six years in exile still spoke to his fashionable Mayfair customers with the same Kinross accent as that of his boyhood when he had guddled for trout in the South Queich burn.

That was Boswell's gayest journey. Within four years his owner was dead of typhoid, then a scourge along the shores of the Cromarty Firth. Thereafter, Boswell became my mother's own travelling-bag, and she never went anywhere on the briefest visit without him. She was a very indifferent traveller, and to cope with her overpowering headaches she carried an armament of smelling-salts, menthol, peppermints, eau-de-Cologne, and lavender-water. Consequently, in time Boswell became so impregnated with these restoratives that any compartment in which he travelled was soon filled with all the odours of a chemist's shop. By the time, therefore, that he was handed over to me in 1909 I found him as embarrassingly sweet-smelling as a Victorian nosegay. By then, too, the removal of his worn cover clearly revealed him as a survivor from the early days of the late Queen's reign.

I WAS given Boswell, just as my father had been given him, on setting out on the great adventure of earning a living. Like my father on his first journey, I did not allow Boswell, containing my most treasured possessions, including the clothes- and hat-brushes he had carried to Conon in 1867, out of my sight during my journey. Nor at Buchanan Street Station in Glasgow, my destination, did I permit the porter, who had my other luggage on a barrow, to touch him. I was indignant, then, when I caught this porter winking to the cabby as he remarked: 'The gentleman is taking the *new* bag inside with him.' I reluctantly gave the man a tip. If I had had the necessary courage I should certainly not have. Old Stuart, the porter at our own little Badenoch station, carried one's

luggage across the line and put it in the guard's van, and I, at least, never dared to offer him, an elder of the kirk, money.

Boswell served me faithfully in Glasgow in the numerous lodgings, most of them unsatisfactory, in which I encamped during the next few years. The stoutness of his make-up must have been a disappointment to some of my landladies, for numerous mysterious scratches on his lock were evidence of unsuccessful attempts to prise him open.

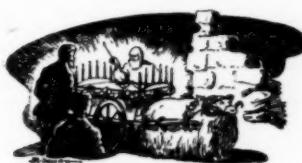
Those years before 1914 were carefree for most young men. As a fact, even many of those who joined Mr Haldane's Territorials instead of playing games never seriously realised what was round the corner. I myself, engrossed in the excitements of a busy shipping company's office all day and in my spare time striving to emulate the magical skill of the Golf Triumvirate, hardly noticed Lord Roberts's call to arms. Even 1911 did not alarm me—on a June evening then I was travelling back to Glasgow from holidays at home in Badenoch, Boswell my companion as always, when the news came out that the Germans had sent a gunboat to Agadir as a gesture in their Moroccan dispute with the French. Several people in the train had been arguing about international affairs and predicting war whenever the Germans had enough Dreadnoughts, but I considered them merely a pack of elderly alarmists. And as I walked out of Buchanan Street Station, carrying Boswell, I was no more disturbed by the newsboys shouting the threat of war than my father had been by the suggestion of the porter at Inverness that he should join the army.

Yet within little more than three years I found myself, still accompanied by Boswell, on my way to join a Highland Field Ambulance at Aberdeen. But, as was the way of army formations in those confused days, this Ambulance had left Aberdeen without warning for the Borders, and so, after being equipped at its depot, I set out in pursuit. I intended to send Boswell, packed with my civilian clothes, home from Aberdeen, but there was no time, and I had to carry him the length of Union Street to the railway station, my immense new kit-bag balanced precariously on one shoulder and threatening all the way to knock off my much too small army cap. Thus, although the street swarmed with recruits every bit as raw as I was, I felt I must be the most conspicuous of them all—I could see no

## CEREMONY OF THE SHEPHERDS

one else carrying a bag so definitely not of military origin as was Boswell. On arriving at Waverley I rushed to the parcels office and ungratefully dumped the aged Boswell there. 'Not taking grandfather to the war?' the counter clerk remarked with a smile. But I was in no mood for a mere civilian's jocularity and asked him to mind his own business. He was, however, good-tempered and

suggested that I should make sure that Boswell was locked. I thawed and thanked him for his advice. 'It's a fine old bag,' he continued as he took charge of Boswell. 'They don't make them of that quality nowadays.' Someone else apparently thought Boswell a fine old bag, too, for I never set eyes on him again. A Victorian had become a casualty of the Great War.



## Ceremony of the Shepherds

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T. KERR RITCHIE

FOR 364 days in the year the French village of Les Baux-en-Provence, in the Middle Ages a fortified town, the home of the troubadours, and the scene of many battles, sleeps forgotten and almost deserted on its limestone crags in the foothills of the Alps east of Avignon.

But this is Christmas Eve, the night of the *Messe des Bergers*, when shepherds and shepherdesses from miles around gather to commemorate the journey of the first shepherds to the stable at Bethlehem in a ritual that can be traced back to the 15th century, and is probably older still. All day the treacherous snowbound roads have been dotted with people making their way up the mountain and through the Col d'Enfer ('Hell Pass') to this strange dead world of ruined houses and crumbling fortifications. All day the ruined palace of the Manvilles, once lords of the manor, has stared blankly under its carved lintels at the strangers thronging the narrow twisting streets. Now in the moonlight the shepherds come in singing, past the white bauxite quarries of the town, which long ago gave the mineral its name; and boys wave electric-torches on the roads to warn the

sightseers' cars of a 400-foot drop into eternity.

**I**N the church the seats have been removed to make room for the expected crowd; and in the empty space a huge ram wanders, followed about by a small, bleating, puzzled lamb. This ram has taken part in the ceremony for the last seven years. Never shorn, he is much sought after as a stud animal, being regarded as sacred, and the bringer of fertility and good fortune to the flocks in the district.

In a side-chapel, carved, like half the church, from the solid rock, a group of shepherds are decorating a miniature cart with candles and evergreens. All their faces have that wise and tender look that one expects shepherds to have. One of them gently leads up the ram from the church interior, and they harness it with scarlet ribbons to the little cart, inside which the lamb is laid, placidly chewing a piece of straw the while.

As the clock strikes the quarter before twelve, the doors are opened and the crowd surges in. A choir of shepherdesses in

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traditional dress begins a carol, accompanied by pipe and tabor. They sing in the old Provençal dialect, but I can follow the words in a rough translation thoughtfully provided by M. le Curé:

*To-night our neighbours  
Were holding a fête.  
With their tambourines  
They gave me a headache.  
With shouts of joy  
They ran over the fields,  
But I was angry  
And could not sleep.*

*As you may believe,  
I got up and dressed,  
And went out to see  
What was going on.  
As I went on my way  
I met Justine  
And said: 'Tell me, neighbour,  
What is all this to-do?'*

*She began to laugh,  
And then she told me.  
She said a Fair Boy  
Had taken our nature,  
To pay the ransom  
Of every creature.  
When I heard this  
I was filled with joy  
And ran to the place  
As fast as a partridge.*

**M**IDNIGHT strikes. There is a stir of expectation, followed by a sudden hush as the priest enters, attended by his acolytes. From behind the high altar the clear voice of the Angel rings out, telling the old tidings that are always new:

*'Shepherds, leave your father's fields  
And worship in this mystery  
A God supreme in majesty  
Yet clothed in our humanity  
And born of a Virgin Mother.'*

But these Provençal shepherds, cautious French peasants, are by no means prepared to take miracles for granted. From the little side-chapel, where the lamb is with its cortège,

a gruff bass voice sings out in answer to the Angel:

*'Do you take me for a fool  
That you talk to me like this?  
I am poor, but a good chap,  
And I come of worthy stock.  
Long ago my great-great-grandsire  
Was the Mayor of this village.'*

The Angel's voice is heard again, serene and unearthly:

*'By the power of the Holy Spirit  
This mighty work is done.  
This Child, skilled in all things,  
Powerful, kind, and wise,  
Is he whom Isaiah foretold.  
Go, then, and pay him homage!'*

The reference to Isaiah evidently convinces the shepherd, for he replies:

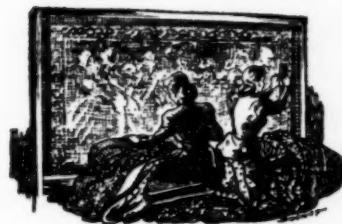
*'If that is so I will go at once,  
Playing on my pipe.  
I will put on my linen shirt  
And my cloak of woollen serge.  
A cask of milk and another of wine  
To refresh us on the road.'*

And in response the Angel sings:

*'Oh go and see, charming shepherd,  
See the thing your heart desires.  
Go, go with a light step  
To the God in whom all breathe.'*

The pipe and tabor music ceases. The lamb and its accompanying escort of shepherds and shepherdesses enter through the main door of the church. The choir chants anew while the oldest shepherd picks up the lamb and carries it up the aisle to the altar, where he kneels and kisses the sacred image. One by one, shepherds and shepherdesses in turn carry the lamb to the altar. All watch in silence a scene that vividly recalls a Judean stable nearly two thousand years ago.

Finally, the youngest shepherdess bears off the lamb. The ceremony is ending. The choir sing like angels. The lamb joins in with its plaintive bleat. The congregation file out joyfully in a buzz of animated conversation, like the shepherds of old, who 'returned, glorifying and praising God.'



## Rags and Tatters

### *The New Art of the Sisters Boileau*

KATHLEEN POND

YEARS ago the visit of the rag-and-bone man was a familiar event in the weekly cycle of English town life. 'Any old rags, bones, or bottles?' was a cry well known to our childhood ears. Did we ever ask ourselves what they were used for, those old rags? Paper, one might have supposed, among other things. Perhaps it was a matter of mild wonder to us that they should be used at all, a mystery that anyone should be able to eke out an existence, however meagrely, by collecting and disposing of them. That anyone from such old rags and tatters should be able to create pictures which would rank as works of art may well seem incredible, yet such has in point of fact been the achievement of two French artists, sisters, whose work is not yet sufficiently known in this country.

ISABELLE and Marguerite Boileau were born at Metz in the last years of the 19th century, afterwards coming to live at Oloron, in Béarn. There, from the windows of their house they would watch the magnificent processions which wound their way from the church around the Place Saint Pierre. What a glorious feast of colour! The blue, red, and violet of the choristers' cassocks, the white linen of the surplices, the cloth of gold of the chasubles, the rich orphreys of the copes. 'Why, the real beauty of all that,' said Isabelle Boileau, 'is the beauty of the stuff, of the silk,

the damask, the brocade, the satin, the velvet, the linen, the lace. Why not try to reproduce the scene, not with oils or water-colours, but with the various materials themselves?' Thus was born the picture made from tiny pieces of fabric, skilfully cut and juxtaposed to form the portrait or landscape as envisaged in the artist's mind.

The first attempt, a picture of the Oloron procession, won the approval of the sisters' friend, Francis Jammes, who encouraged the artists to continue, realising that they had, in fact, discovered a new form of art. It was clear at once that the effects obtained from odds and ends of stuff which would otherwise have been discarded as rags were astounding. To work in the medium of fabric requires an effort of simplification in colour and of stylisation in detail involving a more profound analysis of the content of a picture than would be the case if the artist were using oils or water-colours. This has given to the work of Isabelle and Marguerite Boileau some of the qualities of the Impressionist school and, indeed, their master, Désiré Lucas, was himself an Impressionist. One result of working in fabric was the realisation that it is the quality of the stuff, even more than the colour, which gives life to a picture—velvet will convey the impression of thickness and warmth, watered silk that of marble, or the effects of light, and so on.

If a picture in fabric be examined at close

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quarters, hundreds and hundreds of tiny pieces will be discerned, juxtaposed, it would seem, pell-mell, but the effect, when the picture is regarded as a whole, is to give the impression of something impregnated with life to an extent which it is hard to match in ordinary painting.

THE making of a picture in stuff is based upon the same principle as that underlying the making of any other picture. The artist sketches the landscape or portrait in the usual manner on the canvas. He throws in the main lines with a few deft strokes, and then the work begins. For working in stuff, no palette would be sufficiently vast. Seated in their studio, Isabelle and Marguerite Boileau have at their feet all the odds and ends of stuffs which they have gathered together or which friends have set aside for them—it has happened to them to find a bundle of the precious rags dropped anonymously through their open ground-floor window. The floor is littered with tiny multicoloured patterns, with minute pieces of fabric of every description. The artists pick out the colours required for the picture on which they are engaged, and, as though they were working with the brush, they swiftly cut out the pieces of stuff which, skilfully stitched in position, go to make a picture that is as much a work of art as if it had been done in oil or water-colours.

Isabelle Boileau and her sister began in a humble way, setting to work to discipline scissors and fingers by copying the work of the great masters. They copied Fra Angelico because he was simple, El Greco because of the richness of his princely garments, Poussin because his work was bold, Corot for his treatment of light. After this work of imitation came original pictures in fabric, first of all simple studies of flowers, then stylised landscapes, portraits, and composition pictures.

Their work has had considerable success, notably a Grand Prix at the Paris Salon and in Sweden, where Isabelle Boileau has held several exhibitions. Other exhibitions have been held at Laon and in different centres in the north of France, and in Granada, Spain. Their pictures have attracted the attention of the *Janeiro* of Lisbon, of the *Renaissance* of Cairo, of the *Weitel Wet* of Berlin. Among their best-known works may be instanced 'Le Marché à Stockholm,' with the water in

the foreground, the market-stalls on the sea-shore, and gabled houses and steeped church beyond, and 'Britta,' the head of a young Swedish girl, irresistibly attractive with her glossy hair and bright eyes, into which Isabelle Boileau has contrived to infuse something of their owner's sparkle.

BOOTH the Boileau sisters are disinterested artists, caring little for the profits from or results of their exhibitions. They are artists for art's sake, and the little they have they give. Isabelle, at Oloron, lives entirely for her work, at which she does not care to be disturbed—except by the poor and unfortunate who from the slum-dwellings near by come to tell their troubles to her sympathetic ears. They go away consoled and comforted, knowing that they have someone who will visit them in their sickness and relieve their necessities as far as her means will allow.

Marguerite lives now at Bayonne. She has voluntarily put away from her all that might savour of riches or superfluity, preferring to live from day to day in dependence upon divine Providence, for, according to her philosophy of life, her art will be the gainer for her detachment from material things. Fragile, and delicate in health, she yet esteems the comforts of life as of very slight importance. During the year she spent in Granada, painting the flaming orange skies and violent hues of Andalusia, the rust-coloured stone and mysterious vistas of the Alhambra, Marguerite, despite the slenderness of her resources, would answer every call upon her charity, from befriending lonely foreigners or teaching her language without fee to an impecunious student, to the demands of the pestering, but winsome, little ragamuffins who 'sell' *caravéllos* at exorbitant prices. 'I buy one or two occasionally,' she would explain, 'lest they become too much discouraged.'

Up to the present there has been no exhibition of the Boileau sisters' pictures in stuff in Britain. Such work is a form of art, in the initial stages, perhaps, but clearly with wide possibilities, which should win recognition by its sheer quality of livingness. In this respect may it not justly be considered as a legitimate development of the work of the Impressionists, who in the middle years of the 19th century did so much to raise French art from the mere slavish imitation of nature to a living thing which speaks its own language?



# The Experienced Traveller

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THOMAS FIRBANK

ON the last night of the cruise sadness was mixed with gaiety aboard the *Queen of the South*. The shadow of farewells fell across the festivities of the gala evening. There were eight persons at steward Messenger's table—the Browne family, Mr and Mrs Hocking, Miss Scrivener, and Mr Billington.

Mr Browne was a wholesale grocer from Birmingham, though during the cruise he had put it about in more general terms that he was a business man. He gave the impression that he moved in the rarefied air of high finance, hobnobbing with Rothschilds and Hambros. He was a big, fleshy man, having been untroubled by rationing. His wife, too, was a large woman, with an important figure, gowned always in calf-length shiny dresses. The Browne son, a weedy youth, had a spotty, pale face and lank, plastered hair. By day, he resembled a barber's assistant, and at night, in his dinner-jacket, a seedy musician. The Browne daughter was also ill-favoured, an angular, bustless girl, with a thin, sharp face and a flair for unsuitable clothes. Steward Messenger felt that in labour the elephantine Mrs Browne had brought forth white mice.

Mr Hocking was a senior commercial traveller, though his table-fellows understood

that he was Managing Director of a biscuit factory. He was a dapper man, with a fund of stories, and he and his wife had about them the same brittle brightness as the mirrored, chromium bars which they frequented of a Saturday evening ashore.

The remaining lady, Miss Scrivener, was a middle-aged spinster. She was shaped like a plump bird, was always cheerful, and interested herself in everything and everybody. She was not in the least thwarted, and found full scope for her maternal instinct as matron at a boys' school. She had never once pretended during the voyage to be a head-mistress.

Finally, there was Mr Billington. Mr Billington was a tall, lean man, with aquiline features and abundant iron-grey hair. His fellow-passengers had decided that he was something in the Foreign Office, and Mr Browne went further, stating that he was pretty sure he had run across him before, either in New York or Budapest, and that he seemed to recall meeting an Ambassador of that name at a diplomatic function. It was not surprising that recognition was not mutual, since Mr Browne had been to neither of these cities.

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MR BILLINGTON had established his position as an experienced passenger on the very first evening, when he greeted the table-steward by name. Messenger had been very pleased to see him. 'It's like old times to be seeing you again, sir!' he said.

'Cunard—White Star *Gigantic*, two years ago, was the last time,' reminded Mr Billington.

'That's right, sir,' agreed Messenger, and added: 'You ought to be sitting with the Captain, sir.'

Mr Billington smiled pleasantly. 'The purser told me I'd find you here, Messenger,' he replied kindly. 'You wouldn't have me desert an old friend, would you?'

The Brownes and Hockings strove to conceal that they were impressed. 'Funny thing with servants,' observed Mr Browne. 'You can remember their faces, but it's hard to say where it was you last saw them. I'm pretty certain my deck-steward was on the *Empress of Britain* when I ran across to America in '47.'

Mr Billington agreed that one tended to regard servitors as part of the furniture. He did not state that the *Empress* had been lost by enemy action some years before 1947.

Mr Hocking, who dragged a little way behind the Brownes, recalled that the third-officer was the image of a sailor he remembered on a P. & O. boat, travelling east of Suez. This may have been so, though Mr Hocking could scarcely have recalled it, since his longest sea-voyage hitherto had been from Liverpool to Douglas, Isle of Man.

DURING the first few days of the cruise the Hockings, and more particularly the Brownes, had felt pleasantly elevated to be in the company of Mr Billington at meal-times. His smooth, effortless flow of informed conversation pointed to all that they wished themselves to be. Furthermore, at table excellence was heaped on excellence by steward Messenger, for whom nothing was too much trouble, and who saw to it that many unsolicited extras found their way to the board. This superior service was undoubtedly owed to the aristocratic presence of Mr Billington, and Mr Browne was well aware of the fact, though he said to Miss Scrivener: 'That steward fellow's doing us very well. These chaps know when they are looking after people who understand what's what.'

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Miss Scrivener agreed, spoiling the moment by adding that Mr Billington was certainly a most experienced traveller.

However, the effort of matching Mr Billington's anecdotes with similar ones, just as apt, began to wear down the Brownes and Hockings. The difficulty was increased when the *Queen of the South* began to touch at ports along the Mediterranean seaboard. Mr Hocking, already committed to a voyage East on his P. & O. boat, was forced to buy a stock of guidebooks which he had to study each night in order to be familiar with the places of interest on the route to Suez. Mr Browne plunged more and more deeply into tales of high life in the Legations and Palaces of the larger cities which they visited. If some of these stories were improbable, or indeed impossible, Mr Billington showed no incredulity, and expressed nothing but a courteous interest, for he was a good listener. Then, after an interval, he would recount even more wonderful occurrences, but with a wealth of circumstance which stamped them with authenticity.

It was only Miss Scrivener who lagged behind in *savoir faire*. 'I'm sure it's most interesting to hear you gentlemen talking,' she would say. 'I'll have such a lot to repeat when I get back.'

MR BILLINGTON formed a liking for plump Miss Scrivener and paraded her often up and down the deck. The ship touched at Algiers, where she turned again for home, and Mr Billington took the lady ashore. In a café the Brownes and Hockings, who were together, overheard Mr Billington speaking colloquial French to a waiter, and Arabic to a carpet-vendor, who came to his table with rugs draped over his shoulder. This fluency was something with which no guidebook could keep them abreast, and the two families stole silently away. Shortly afterwards they were robbed by a trinket-seller.

On the way back to the boat Miss Scrivener wanted to buy two pairs of leather slippers. The man asked three pounds for them, a price which Mr Billington stated was outrageous, and, reluctantly, the lady passed on.

AT dinner on the last evening of the trip there was an atmosphere of tension at

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Mr Billington's table. Both Mr Browne and Mr Hocking seemed faintly uneasy as the steward Messenger excelled himself in deference and service.

It was the uninhibited Miss Scrivener who resolved the problem. She turned to Mr Billington and said: 'I'm sure I don't know how much to give that nice steward.'

Mr Billington considered the question carelessly. 'I shall give him a tenner,' he said. 'He's looked after me on so many voyages that I feel a special obligation. Of course, the accepted amount is only a fiver a head. I'm sure that if you ask Mr Browne you'll find that is what he has in mind.'

'That's right,' agreed Mr Browne, thankful that his wallet was still bulky. 'Doesn't do to overtip.'

Mr Hocking made a mental calculation and reckoned that he could just tip for his wife and himself provided they forwent an evening at the Palladium.

Miss Scrivener felt openly in her bag. 'There!' she said. 'It's lucky that I didn't buy those slippers. I can just do it.'

Mr Billington took out a ten-pound note, folded it modestly, and put it on a plate. 'I always think it saves trouble to make a communal offering,' he said, passing the plate along to Mr Browne.

Presently the gratified Messenger accepted his gratuities with the air of a sidesman in a cathedral, wished his charges Godspeed, and bowed himself away.

MR BILLINGTON returned to his cabin after dinner. The steward was already there, lying relaxed on the bunk.

"Lo, Charlie!" Messenger greeted him.

"Lo, Henry!" said Mr Billington to his brother-in-law.

It was the first sea-trip which Mr Billington had made since he had retired from the Merchant Navy two years before, with the rank of Chief Steward. It was satisfactory to think that, what with the share-out now due between his relative and himself, and some skilful purchases for resale made in the foreign haunts which he knew so well from of old, his expenses would be covered.

Messenger swung his legs to the floor and from his pocket laid some notes on the bunk. He extracted Mr Billington's contribution. 'There's your ten-spot back,' he said. 'Leaves thirty-five quid to divvy up. If you hadn't done your stuff, there'd only've been about a quid a nob. A bit rough on the old school ma'am, though.'

Mr Billington put away his half-share of the tips, then handed a parcel to steward Messenger. 'The old girl would've paid three quid for these slippers to one of those robbers in Algiers,' he said, 'if I hadn't stopped her. I went back and got 'em for thirty bob. Get 'em popped in her cabin, with my compliments.'

As well as being an experienced traveller, Mr Billington was nothing if not a real gentleman.

## Ballet for Eyes

*In the day of cold that follows the night  
After a party of winged delight,  
The feet of the crows are treading, treading,  
Reminders that youth is poised for flight.*

*Dark ones, depart, giving way to the linnets,  
Or flashes of green and gold array  
When a charm of finches like feathered jewels  
Dance on their filigree feet like spray.*

*Flutter and tread, little birds, your criss-cross  
Ballet for eyes down the snow of years,  
Laughter's the drop-scene hiding the terror,  
Kisses for crosses atone for much error,  
For sweeter than youth is the joy born of tears.*

ODETTE TCHERNINE.



## Flower Scents and Perfumes

R. W. MONCRIEFF

IT is one of the characteristics of the sense of smell that almost always it evokes a clear response of liking or of dislike. Seldom, when we deliberately sniff at something, do we experience only a neutral response. The sense of taste largely shares this characteristic, but our main senses, those of sight, sound, and touch, are not so characterised. The most likely reason for the positive nature of the response is that smell and taste are the senses that guided our ancestors, before the coming of civilisation, in the discovery and selection of their food. Smell was the distance nutritional sense, that which aided or even made possible the finding of food; taste was the final arbiter, relishing the good, rejecting what was bad but which had deceived the nose. There was little room for half-measures with hungry people in search of food; smells were good or bad, only unusually would they be indifferent.

The habit survives to-day, and, although the sense of smell is used so little in civilised life, so great were the olfactory powers of our ancestors that we still possess an olfactory apparatus whose workings astonish us occasionally, as when a whiff of perfume perceived inattentively carries us back to some scene of our childhood with a striking vividness.

MANY of the scents that we like, from

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which we derive a positive sensation of pleasure, are those of leaves and flowers; some, although so few as almost to constitute a rarity, of the smells that we detest come also from leaves and flowers. As would be expected, much greater attention has been paid to the former group, and the idea is widespread that the majority of flowers have delightful odours. Many, of course, do, and the reader will be familiar with the rose, wallflower, hawthorn, hyacinth, and meadowsweet, and possibly with the violet, although it is surprising how few people ever smell real violets. There are, however, a large number of flowers which have very little odour. Emphasis was laid on this point by an investigation carried out by Arno Müller of the frequency with which different fragrances occur in nature. He examined 1266 different kinds of blossom, and he found that: 692 had little or no odour, 211 had cabbage-like odours, 138 had spicy odours, 63 had odours rather like heliotrope, 35 had honey odours, 32 had jasmin odours, 32 had narcotic odours, 19 had balsamic odours, 18 had cedar odours, 14 had odours closely resembling heliotrope, and 12 had orange-blossom odours. By no means all flowers have delightful perfumes. Many are inodorous; many are cabbage-like; only the minority are delightful.

A few flowers have positively repulsive odours. Thus *Satyrium hircinum*, an orchid, repels by its goat-like stench; the *Stapelia*, the carrion-flowers, exhale odours of putrescent flesh, so that insects, deceived by the odours,

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deposit their eggs on the calyces of the flowers, although the carnivorous grubs which will emerge from the eggs must inevitably perish; the stinking goosefoot, *Chenopodium vulvaria*, has an odour similar to that of putrid salt-fish, due to the trimethylamine—ordinarily a constituent of herring-brine—that it exhales. But against these we must, to maintain a true balance, recall the lily-of-the-valley, carnations and pinks, herbaceous phlox, cowslips, cyclamen, night-scented stock, mignonette, sweet-pea, sweet-sultan, the jonquil, the pheasant's eye narcissus, honeysuckle, jasmin, and wistaria.

ALL sweet-scented flowers can bring olfactory delight to most of us, but not necessarily to all of us, for only about two people out of three have a standard olfactory equipment; the other third have slightly different reactions—some cannot sense some odours at all, others find odours that are commonly enjoyed unpleasant.

An experiment carried out by A. F. Blakeslee well illustrated these differences. He noticed that of two kinds of verbena flowers, one that was pale pink smelt like arbutus to himself but had no pronounced smell for his assistant, whilst a red variety was odourless to Blakeslee but fragrant to his assistant, who thought it resembled the smell of a carnation. Blakeslee put the two flowers before a number of other people and asked them to smell them, the tests being made with the eyes closed. There was an amusing uniformity in the reaction of the subjects. The subject would generally say he was afraid he was not smelling well that day, would then blow his nose and almost at once pick out either the pink or the red and wonder how anyone could think the other fragrant. Blakeslee found that seventeen men and nine women chose the pink flower, nine men and four women the red; two of the women found both flowers fragrant.

Some people, too, are emotionally aroused by certain flower-scents. The bean flower is said to have a disturbing effect on many people. There is a mediæval rhyme:

*Cum faba florescit,  
Stultorum copia crescit.  
(When beans are in flower,  
Fools are in full strength.)*

F. A. Hampton records the case of a girl who, on approaching a beanfield in flower, ex-

perienced an extraordinary sense of elation and joy, which mounted to excitement, with quick breathing and beating heart, when she was actually passing the field or close to it. The scent of a single flower had no effect; it was only when the air was permeated with the odorous exhalation from thousands of flowers that she experienced her 'beanfield feeling.' I recall, too, that McKenzie, in his book *Aromatics and the Soul*, recorded a sentimental interlude that took place in a flowering beanfield, although apparently he was unaware of the potent action of the flowers.

History records that some individuals suffered excessively from an allergy to certain scents. Catherine de' Medici could not endure the scent of roses, and her aversion was so great that if she saw the painting of one she was seized with some degree of nausea. The Chevalier de Guise was still more easily affected, for he fainted at the sight of a bunch of roses. Pouchet records that in 1779 a woman died in London during the night from having kept a large bouquet of irises in her room, whilst Triller saw a young girl perish in the same way from the effects of a bouquet of violets. Workmen who have fallen asleep on bales of saffron are reported to have died in consequence. There are other similar accounts, most of them probably apocryphal, of tragedies due to the scent of roses. It would, though, be foolish to dismiss all such stories as false; many of us to-day are, I am sure, filled with an enchantment and elation, a kind of intoxication, when smelling some of the headier flowers, such as hawthorn, hyacinth, or night-scented stock. Let the reader who may be sceptical savour the fragrance of queen of the meadow on a day of hot sun.

Despite the strange effects that flower perfumes may have on individuals who may be allergic or have some idiosyncrasy towards them, despite the milder intoxication that many of us can enjoy, the majority of scented flowers exact from most people only a simple pleasure. Perhaps the experience of smelling a flower is one of the purest of aesthetic pleasures that can be enjoyed, one that is appreciated equally by young and old, for there is little evidence that the power or acuteness of the sense of smell diminishes with age. So general is the delight experienced from the scent of flowers that a large and flourishing perfumery industry has grown up to cater for it. This it does by extracting the essential oils

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from the flowers, isolating the components, ascertaining to which components the characteristic perfume of a flower is due, sometimes synthesising perfume materials which are chemically indistinguishable from those isolated from flowers, and, finally, by compounding from the isolates and synthetics perfumes to delight women and disturb men. Was it in *Punch* it was related that 'the girl said it repelled flies and attracted men'?

LET us first consider the essential oils. It is one of the properties of most powerfully odorant materials that they are insoluble in water; there are a few well-known exceptions, like sulphuretted hydrogen, sulphur dioxide, and ammonia, but most strongly odorous compounds are insoluble or only very slightly soluble in water, and if they happen to be liquids at ordinary temperatures then they are called oils. The essential oils of flowers, leaves, seeds, and other parts of plants are simply the water-insoluble substances which have been separated from them, and which usually have powerful odours.

Essential oils are used not for lubricating machinery but for making scents and cosmetics, for perfuming soaps and disinfectants, and for flavouring confectionery and other foodstuffs. They are used, too, as a source of chemicals. For instance, the oil from lemon-grass, *Andropogon schenanthus*, which grows prolifically in Cochin and Guatemala, contains about 70 per cent of citral, a substance which has an intense aromatic lemon smell and which is very useful to perfumers and flavourers; there is no way of synthesising citral so cheaply as by extracting it from oil of lemon-grass. Accordingly, citral as ordinarily used is an 'isolate'—it has been isolated from a natural material—and is not a synthetic. Other perfumery chemicals may be made from citral. One of these is geraniol, which contributes a good deal to the light, lifting odour of some roses. The essential oil from roses is known as attar of roses, and that from orange-flowers as neroli oil.

Different parts of different plants yield different oils. There is cinnamon leaf oil as well as cinnamon bark oil. Neroli, one of the main constituents of eau-de-Cologne, comes from orange-flowers; oil of orange-peel, which is quite different, comes from the peel; and oil of petit-grain from the leaves and twigs of the bitter orange. The flowers of

mignonette, *Reseda odorata*, yield an oil with a powerful floral odour, but the roots give one with an unpleasant smell of radishes. The odour of violets is to be found in iris rhizomes, but not in their flowers.

The locality in which a plant is grown affects the oil. English oil of lavender is much superior to French oil of lavender, and commands a price some eight times greater on the market. Likewise, the altitude at which flowers are grown affects the quality of the oil. The time of year when the flowers are picked has a bearing on it, too; usually when flowers are at their most plentiful they give the best oil as well as the best yield. The preparation of the oil can make or mar its quality; there is an oil with a magnificent odour made from the Eastern flower, ylang-ylang (flower of flowers), and a much inferior oil known as cananga from the same flowers. Ylang-ylang oil constitutes the first two-thirds of the distillation, cananga the last third.

The variety of the flower often determines the odour of the flower and of the oil. Most rhododendrons are not strongly scented and those that are normally met in garden and park are uninteresting from the olfactory standpoint, but let the reader, next time he is in the glasshouses at Kew, smell at the variety *odoratissima*; it has a heavenly scent, although in appearance it is a rather drab pink. Only seldom are glory of colour and beauty of scent found together. Roses, with which we are all familiar, vary from odourless to old-rose through a variety of perfumes; the wild rose is perhaps the lightest and most delicate in odour, and deep-red roses, like Hugh Dickson, have the rich old-rose perfume, and Frau Karl Druschki is typical of the many that are odourless; but surely some of the following, reported by H. R. Darlington and all of them roses, are surprising: Golden Emblem—apricot scent; Catherine Mermet—peach scent; Mrs Foley Hobbs—sweet tea scent; Evangeline—honey scent; Eugénie Lamesch—violet scent.

THERE are four main methods for separating the essential oil from the flowers—namely: distillation, enfleurage, extraction, and expression.

Distillation is the most widely used. The blossoms, which must be freshly picked and free from twigs, etc., are loaded into a still and distilled with water. The essential oil

## FLOWER SCENTS AND PERFUMES

steam-distils and floats on the top of the distillate. The bottom aqueous layer may contain some odorous material—for example, in the distillation of roses, the oil is the attar, but the watery layer—rose-water—contains the phenylethyl alcohol. Sometimes phenylethyl alcohol (synthetic) is added to rose oil to make up for the loss of this substance in the rose-water. Most attar of roses comes from Bulgaria, where the *Rosa damascena* is grown in huge quantities. One ton of roses will give from two to two-and-a-half pounds of oil.

Enfleurage is the most refined and expensive of all extraction processes, but it has two advantages over distillation. First, it is carried out at ordinary temperatures, so that there is no danger of heat decomposing some of the most delicate and sensitive odorant materials, which are liable to suffer during distillation, and second, there is no loss of any of the components as there is in the water-phase of the distillate. In enfleurage, trays are covered with fat and strewn with flower-petals; the fat absorbs the odorous materials from the flowers, and after a time the fat is extracted with alcohol and is re-used; the alcohol now contains the flower-scent materials, and, if evaporated, it leaves a semi-solid residue, known as a floral concrete. If the concrete is re-extracted with alcohol, most of the wax is left behind, and a nearly pure oil—called a floral absolute—can be obtained by evaporating the alcohol. In the south of France, at Grasse, centre of the flower-growing industry, jasmin flowers, *Jasminum grandiflorum*, are treated in this way.

In the third method, extraction, the flower-petals are extracted with a low-boiling organic solvent. The extract is then distilled, often under reduced pressure, so that its distillation temperature will be low and there will be less danger of heat damage to the residue, which consists of the essential oil. The solvent can be used repeatedly.

Expression is the method used for fruit rinds, such as those of orange, lemon, and lime, rather than for flowers. The whole fruit is washed, crushed between rollers, sprayed with water, and the oil separated from the water in a centrifuge.

In addition to these four main methods no little attention has been given to the possibility of absorbing the odorous principles of flowers on activated charcoal. This process is similar to enfleurage, but activated charcoal replaces

the grease. The advantages are that more intimate contact is possible between carbon and flowers than between grease and flowers, that the carbon does not become rancid as grease does, and that the process is more rapid. It has, too, been suggested that adsorption could conveniently be carried out in tropical countries where flowers are grown, and only the adsorbate, the carbon containing the flower scents, shipped home.

MOSTLY, flower oils are complicated mixtures; ylang-ylang, for example, contains some forty different chemical substances. Usually esters predominate, then aldehydes and ketones and alcohols. Attar of roses contains about 50 per cent citronellol, and, in addition, geraniol and nerol; petit-grain, made from the leaves and young shoots of *Citrus aurantium*, contains geraniol, linaloöl, and methyl anthranilate; the violet depends for its odour on the irones, compounds known for fifty years, but first synthesised as recently as 1947; orange-flowers depend for their odour on methyl anthranilate, but the oil additionally contains nerol, geraniol, linaloöl, and phenylethyl alcohol; oil of lavender, made from the flowers of *Lavandula vera*, depends mainly on linalyl acetates and other esters for its perfume, but also contains linaloöl, geraniol, cineol, and limonene; jasmin oil contains jasmone, indole, and methyl anthranilate; hawthorn and meadowsweet depend largely for their scent on the powerfully odoriferous anisaldehyde. Sometimes, as a flower becomes past its prime, unpleasant odours appear. Hawthorn, in particular, becomes almost fishy, due to the presence of trimethylamine—a sound reason for the superstition that it is unlucky to bring the blossom into the house.

When methyl anthranilate was isolated from oil of orange-flowers and shown to be the essential odoriferous constituent, and when phenylethyl alcohol was found to be the odorous principle in rose-water, the possibility was presented to the chemist of synthesising these odorous principles. There is no difficulty in synthesising phenylethyl alcohol, and when it is so made it is indistinguishable from the phenylethyl alcohol that occurs in rose-water. Why then go to all the trouble and expense of extracting scent from flowers when their odorous principles can be made in the laboratory and the factory? Many flower perfumes can be reproduced

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synthetically, but still, even to-day, the very finest of all perfumes consist, if not wholly, at least in part, of natural extracts. A high-class synthetic attar of roses will have perhaps 10 per cent of natural attar added to it, to give it life. Why, one asks, should this be necessary? If the natural odorous ingredients of the flower perfume can be analysed and then synthesised, surely the isolate and the synthetic should be exactly the same. Individually they are. The methyl anthranilate that is to be found in orange-blossom is indistinguishable from methyl anthranilate that has been synthesised from naphthalene by the route: naphthalene → phthalic acid → phthalimide → potassium phthalaminate → anthranilic acid → methyl anthranilate.

The difficulty of matching exactly with synthetics the scent of a flower lies in its complexity, for not one or two, but perhaps thirty or forty, odorous compounds may contribute to the perfume of a single flower—many of them present in such slight traces that they can scarcely be detected, yet so characteristically odorous that they can modify the scent of the whole.

THE synthesist has opened up new possibilities that nature never provided. Methyl anthranilate is to be found in orange-flowers and methyl anthranilate constitutes a large part of mandarin oil, but nature never, so far as we know, used ethyl anthranilate, which has a sweeter and softer perfume than the methyl ester; nor geranyl anthranilate, which is fuller; nor menthyl anthranilate, which absorbs ultra-violet rays so well that it is used effectively in sun-tan oils. Similarly, the detection of traces of some of the higher aldehydes in flower oils has encouraged the synthesist to prepare still higher aldehydes. Lauric aldehyde does not, so far as we are aware, occur naturally in any flower, but a

trace of this synthetic added to a floral perfume will lift it out of the rut and give it a distinction it otherwise lacked. Lauric aldehyde and some of the higher lactones are responsible for the sophisticated very high note of the modern expensive perfume.

To compound a perfume is the work of an artist, of a man with a highly-trained nose. His composition will contain a variety of substances—probably from twelve to twenty. Most usually he is not a chemist, but is an artist-perfumer; he makes the best use of the isolates that the chemist prepares from the flowers, and of the synthetics which he makes to match and outvie them. One can find formulæ for scents in books, but they are rarely exactly what an artist would use. Perfumery is still an art that keeps its secrets.

Nature is not purposeless; she does not create a property that has no function. What is the purpose of the perfume of flowers? Naturalists have sought to find the answer in the attraction that many flowers have for insects, which fertilise the flowers in their movements over them. Sometimes it seems that scent will attract insects, in other cases colour seems to be the attraction. A great deal of work has been carried out, and is still being carried out, to resolve this question. The evidence as it stands to-day suggests that in many cases, but not in all, flower scents do attract insects that fertilise them.

Another possibility is that the flower scents may be distasteful or even lethal to harmful insects. Some of the anthranilates and anisates appear to have fungistatic powers, and may protect their plants from fungal attack. In insects themselves, and even in mammals, odorous emanations are a secondary sex-characteristic, and it may well be that the main function of scent in flowers is to assist in their fertilisation. But often the truth is simple—perhaps the Creator's only purpose in giving flowers perfume was to delight humanity.

## Economy

*I have no need to make a will,  
Because my capital is nil.  
And since I am a woman grown,  
I know I have one of my own.*

LORNA WOOD.



## *Frith's Fat Lady*

MARY WALKER

IT was raining when Frith's Fair moved into Lyncastle. It was a December afternoon, with the dark coming down early and tyres whispering viciously along the greasy roads. Jimmy Moran leaned against one of the empty pens in the cattle-market and watched the trucks rolling on to the waste ground opposite the Rose and Crown. The year Jimmy was born, a sailor was killed with a broken bottle in a fight at the Rose and Crown, and in the autumn of the same year a bomb fell on the cattle-market and blew all the glass out of the Rose and Crown's windows. But Jimmy knew nothing about the sailor or the bomb, and, whether he looked sideways at the line of pens or across the road to the public-house, his mind was as clear as a glass of fresh water.

Frith's Fair, on the other hand, was a part of his experience, and he caught his breath in recognition as a gaudy motor-caravan rumbled past him, wheeling over to the side of the ground. 'Frith's Is Here Again' the van announced in curly red script on its yellow paint. The big trucks behind the van were covered with canvas, but Jimmy could see the painted ends of swing-boats rearing up underneath, and strong red girders and

planks and lengths of rope. He shifted from one foot to the other, because his shoes were apt to let in water, while his eyes moved from truck to truck and back again to the motor-caravan, which had finally dropped anchor a few yards away from him.

At the back window a broad, smiling face appeared, looking out. *Frith's Fat Lady!* Jimmy swept the rain out of his eyes with a rapid hand and stared enthralled at this preview. Now he was really seeing something. The boys at school, who were sometimes taken to fairs in the big towns, were inclined to look down on Lyncastle and Frith. There was nothing much about Frith's Fair, they implied, no size, no sensations; but even they had to admit that the Fat Lady was the exception. Frith's Fat Lady was the hugest woman anyone had ever seen, or was ever likely to see: she was real, she was genuine, she was enormous.

JIMMY MORAN stared until his eyes ached, praying for the Fat Lady to open the door and climb out. Instead, the door of the driving-cabin opened, and a lean, wiry little man jumped to the ground. This,

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though Jimmy did not recognise him, was Frith. He screwed up his nose at the rain, shook his fist, grinning, at the sky, and trotted briskly to the back window, smiling at the Fat Lady. This series of expressions rolled across his face at lightning speed, the wrinkles rearranging themselves, appearing and disappearing, as though, instead of skin, his head were covered with indiarubber. Frith's eyes were brown and shabby-looking, his hair, dark red, was plastered in thin, greased strips over his head. He had a battered look, but the hilarious movements of his mouth kept any sort of pity at arm's-length. When I die, the mouth seemed to say, I shall certainly die laughing. Life? What a shambles—but what a scream!

"Nice day for the ducks, Rosie!" Frith shouted.

The Fat Lady leaned out of her window and nodded. When you came to consider her, close up and framed like this, she had a beautiful face, broad and calm and kindly, that made you think of firesides and fields of corn—the permanent, comfortable things. "The public's here to welcome us," she said, nodding across at Jimmy, who, still poised on one foot, nearly fell over with emotion at being noticed.

"Ay, the faithful public." Frith nodded too, and then he beckoned.

Jimmy levelled himself on to both feet, looked round behind him to see if perhaps they meant someone else, and then advanced slowly.

"Coming to see the Fair?" Frith asked him. Jimmy nodded.

"Well, here's sixpence. Don't spend it on candy-floss and make yourself sick."

"Thank you very much," said Jimmy, examining Frith's sixpence as though it were some strange foreign coin. "Are you the man who makes his face go down the back of his neck?"

Frith and Rosie laughed loudly and with great appreciation. Jimmy saw that he had made some kind of ridiculous mistake, and scowled down at his leaking shoes, as if it was all their fault for walking him into trouble.

"No, lad," Frith said at last. "And I'm not the one that teaches fleas to dance neither, nor yet the one that sets the coconuts up. I'm the power behind the scenes, that's what I am. I'm the boss." He winked at Rosie. "Well, you two get on with your chat. You're

O.K. here, aren't you, Rosie? I'll just nip across to the R.C. and tell the girl-friend I'm here. Ta-ta." He included them both in a wave, and set off, head down, splashing across the waste ground towards the road.

THE Fat Lady's eyes followed Frith, and she sighed. She watched him push at the door and go inside, and when the door closed, and there was nothing else to see, she went on watching just the same.

It seemed a long time to Jimmy before she looked down again and remembered him. "My goodness, you're wet," she said. "Isn't it time you went home for your tea? What will your mum say?"

"She won't say anything. She's all right. She likes me to enjoy myself."

Rosie smiled. "You're an old-fashioned one. You know who I am, don't you?" she asked.

Jimmy nodded. "I saw you last year at the Fair."

"That's right," she said, and her eyes were on the side door of the Rose and Crown again. "I'm the Fat Lady."

Jimmy saw that she was sad, like his mother was sometimes, and it worried him. "You're a nice lady," he said quickly.

Rosie looked down at him then, giving him all her attention. "Why, bless the child," she said, "bless your little heart." Her eyes were suddenly full of tears. She turned away inside the van, blinking, and came back with a paper-bag in her hand. "Here," she said, "there's a few gingerbreads for you. Only mind and don't eat them on the way home and spoil your tea."

"No," he said, "I won't. Thank you."

"Cheerio," she said. "Be seeing you at the Fair, eh?"

He nodded, backing away, clutching his gingerbread. He had left her now, and was already rehearsing how he would say, "Look, mum, I got you a present," or maybe he would make her close her eyes, and put the bag in her hands and she'd have to guess what it was before she could look. At the roadside he waved, and the Fat Lady waved back. Then he turned and ran straight for home, muttering to himself, "Close your eyes and open your hands and see what the fairies send you." Rosie stood where she was, and stared through the dusk at the side door, and waited for Joe Frith to come out of it.

## FRITH'S FAT LADY

THE next night the Fair opened, for the first of its three nights in Lyncastle. The rain kept off, and there was a good crowd. It was early-closing day, so a lot of the shop people, who had been to the pictures in the afternoon, came on to the Fair at night. Frith, moving round in the throng to see how he was doing, was highly satisfied. The biggest crowd, as usual, was outside Rosie's tent. 'See the Fat Lady,' the placard urged them. 'She's the Biggest Woman in the World. All Solid Flesh, Friends, No Deception.'

Frith nodded to the girl who was taking the money, and went inside. Rosie sat on a sofa in a kind of roped-off enclosure—he saw no reason why the public should be allowed to poke her and blow down her neck for their sixpences. But they had to have their money's-worth and see that there was indeed no deception, so she did not wear many clothes. She sat there in her pink and her spangles, doing a bit of knitting, and Frith thought with pride that she was one of the loveliest, healthiest-looking women you could wish to see. There was nothing repulsive about Rosie; she was a real joy.

When there was a moment's lull, he moved over to the ropes. 'All right, love? Warm enough?'

She beamed on him. 'Hullo, Joe. Looks like a good night, eh? Yes, I'm as warm as toast, thanks—all this nice hot breath the public gives us for nothing!' They both laughed. Frith was excited, she could see, more excited than an ordinary opening night ought to make him.

'Got some news for you,' he said out of the side of his mouth before he slipped away. 'See you after we close.'

She nodded, smiling, but suddenly, although the public was still giving away its breath, she shivered somewhat, and bent her head over her knitting.

'Making yourself some smalls?' somebody called out. 'Bet that'll take you a week or two!' There was laughter and cheering, and she looked up to grin and wave her knitting. The night went on, and the noise, and the brassy music from the merry-go-round, and the stream of people filing in and out of the tent. It was a very long wait for Frith's news.

At last it was over. Midnight and silence, the sideshows covered in canvas, the flares out and the lights dimmed.

FRITH came, as he always did, to have supper with Rosie in her van. 'You look a bit tired to-night, Rosie,' he said. 'Not getting you down, is it?'

'After fifteen years? Not likely. It's my life, and it suits me fine.'

'That's all right, then. Only I wonder sometimes—people gaping at you and all that.'

'No,' she said, 'I don't mind that. It pleases them, and it doesn't hurt me. If I was outside it'd be different, but here it's all right. I'm *supposed* to look like I do look, and I earn my living by it, and I'm not lonely here.' She broke off and pulled her chair up to the table. 'I don't know what I'm going on like this for. What's this news you've got?' She made herself busy cutting bread while she listened to his reply, because she knew what it was going to be.

'I wanted you to be the first to know,' he said. 'Me and Sue's getting married.'

'Well, that's fine,' she said heartily, and did not need to say any more, because he went straight on.

'Sue said she was getting browned off with it, only seeing me sometimes, and having to chase all over the country after me, what with me tied up with the Fair and her tied to the bar at the Rose and Crown. So I says, "Why don't we get married and you come along with me?" "All right," she says, and there you are! So how about it, Rosie? What price Joe Frith as a married man?'

'You'll need to have this van, you and her,' Rosie said practically. 'It's the biggest. I can move into yours.'

'We'll see, we'll see; maybe I'll get a brand-new van. Christmas-time we're doing it, see? And next year we'll have some fine old times, all of us. You like Sue, don't you, Rosie? She'll be real company for you.' He went on about it for a long time. Joe was always a great talker.

THE next morning, Friday, Joe brought Sue across to have a cup of tea with them and take a good look at the sort of van she was going to live in. She looked surprised to see Rosie there. 'Oh, hullo, Rose,' she said.

'Hullo, Sue. Congratulations.'

Sue laughed. 'It's the man you have to congratulate,' she said.

'Oh,' said Rosie. 'Is it?'

Sue was looking about her critically.

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'Well,' she said, 'I guess I could fix up one of these all right for moving around in. It's funny not to have a proper home though, isn't it?'

Joe grinned. 'This is a proper home, my lass. You move it from one place to another, but it's a home all right. You'll see.'

But Sue was staring at Rosie's slippers on the floor. 'Lord, are those yours? I bet I could get both my feet in one of them!'

Rosie pushed the slippers away under a chair. 'Yes,' she said, 'I expect you could.' Sue was dark and slim, and had a wonderful figure for a woman of forty. Rosie imagined her neat, pretty dresses hanging in the wardrobe, and the rows of little pretty shoes underneath.

Friday was a good night, too, but it was a long night for Rosie. Joe never came in to see if she was warm enough; she did a big stretch of her knitting. At midnight he came to the van for supper, as usual. 'Sorry I didn't get round to-night,' he said. 'Sue was off, and I was talking things over with her. You know how it is.'

'No,' she wanted to shout at him. 'No, I don't know. How would I know? I never will.' But she said, 'Yes, Joe, that's all right.'

SATURDAY was the best night of all. Frith went in to see Rosie about eight o'clock. There was a good crowd in the tent, and when he went over to the ropes Rosie was talking to a pale, shy young woman and a small boy.

'Look who's here, Joe,' she said. 'You remember?'

He looked at the young woman and thought she seemed a nice lass, but he didn't remember her. Then he caught sight of the boy. 'Why, it's the first of the public!' he said.

They all laughed, and the young woman said: 'I hope he wasn't a nuisance to you. He was ever so excited.'

'Not a bit of it! He cheered us up like anything. Didn't he, Rosie?'

She smiled her comfortable smile. 'Like anything,' she agreed.

'Enjoying yourself, youngster?' Frith asked Jimmy.

He nodded, shining-eyed.

'That's right, that's what fairs are for—chaps like you. Here, we can't have you spending a bob on paying a social call.'

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There's your money back, take your mum on the Dodgems.'

'It is kind of you,' the young woman said. 'I hope we'll see you again some time.'

'Sure to,' Rosie said. 'We'll be back. Enjoy yourselves. Good-night, love,' she added softly to Jimmy, whose eyes were fixed on her.

'Good-night,' he said. He and his mother went out, hand in hand. They were having a wonderful time.

'Nice to have a kid,' Rosie said, watching them.

'Um?' Joe turned back to her. 'What did you say?'

'Nothing. See you at supper-time.'

'O.K. So long.'

JOE went off the ground and across to the Rose and Crown. The place was packed full, and Sue was run off her feet. 'Come back later, 'bout half-eleven, then we can have a talk,' she told him. He nodded. That meant he'd be late for supper with Rosie. Never mind, she'd understand.

It was almost twelve when he got to the Rose and Crown again; he had to give an eye to the packing up, especially on the last night.

'Thought you was never coming,' Sue said crossly. She was dead-tired, smoking a cigarette as though it was nourishment, with her feet propped up on a chair. 'I've been thinking,' she said, 'why don't you give it up, this trailing round? We'll be worn out all our lives. Why couldn't you settle down, at the seaside or something?'

Frith, halfway down to a chair, got up and stared at her. 'Give it up? Give the show up? I couldn't get in at the sea—besides, there's the winter. It's a great life, Sue. Honest, it is. You'll see. It gets in your blood.'

'I don't want it in my blood,' she said sharply. 'And I don't want to spend the rest of my life being girls-together with that freak of yours—it makes me sick to look at her!'

For a moment he did not understand her, then his eyes opened wide, unbelieving. 'Rosie?' he said. 'You mean *Rosie*? She's no freak. I don't know what you mean. Why, she's the kindest, dearest soul I've ever known, and as for making you sick, you must be off your head! She's fine to look at!'

Sue jumped up, stamping her cigarette

## FRITH'S FAT LADY

under her foot. 'All right then, all right! You look at her and keep right on looking at her, and drive round in your miserable vans like a lot of gipsies, but you can count me out!'

'Sue, you're tired, that's all—Sue . . .'

'Tired of *you* I am! Now get away out of here and leave me alone!'

He went. He shook his head as he came out into the night air, like a dog shaking off water. What did it mean? He saw the light burning in Rosie's van and automatically walked towards it. Rosie would know.

**T**HREE was no answer when Joe knocked and no answer when he called. He opened the door and went in. Rosie was not there, but his supper was waiting for him. He went over to the table and saw the piece of paper propped on his plate. Rosie's writing was big and round and childish:

*'Dear Joe,'* she had written, *'I never thought I would but I've got to go. Its only natural you wanting to get married and Sue is all right but you see Joe I've got feelings like all the other women even if I am a freak they only gave me feelings like everyone else and though theres things I cant have and I dont expect them I know I cant go on seeing that woman with her little hands and feet and everything and having her shivering at me even if she cant help it. We had some happy times Joe all these years and they have been the happiest in all my life. I hope youll have lots more Joe and not think bad of me for going off. All the best dear Joe you have always been good to me. Rose.'*

He read it through twice, carefully, every word. 'Women!' he said helplessly, and his thoughts went back to the scene with Sue. It was then he realised that this was quite different, *this* was something he could not endure. 'Oh, God, Rosie, where've you gone?' he muttered as he wrenched at the door and stumbled down the steps.

He got clear of the ground and began to run up the hill into the town. Where he was going, and how he hoped to find her, he had no idea, only he had to be moving, he had to be looking. It was raining again, falling coldly on his thinly-covered head. 'Rosie, where the hell are you?' he repeated, over and over in a panting whisper.

Then he saw her. Not going away from him, but coming towards him, down the hill, ponderously, carrying a suitcase. In her

ordinary outdoor clothes she looked bigger than ever, like a waterproofed haystack. She saw him in the same moment, and came on slowly. He stood still, taking his breath in great heaves, waiting for her. At last they stood together, looking at each other. 'Joe,' she said, 'why haven't you got your hat on?'

'To hell with my hat!' he shouted. 'What're you trying to do? Worry me into my grave?'

She shook her head. 'I'm sorry. I didn't think. It was taking part of your living away from you, wasn't it? I couldn't do that, so I'm coming back. I'm sorry, Joe, I was acting like I was an ordinary woman.'

The wrinkles slid over his face into a strange pattern. 'You're no ordinary woman, Rosie love, you've got a heart, that's what you've got, and don't you go hurting yourself talking that way, because it isn't right and it isn't true and—' He looked up and saw the tears running over her broad, lovely cheeks. But she was smiling. 'Joe,' she said, 'whatever are we crying about?'

'Who's crying?' he said belligerently, then grinned, and blew his nose. 'Come on, let's get home out of the wet.' He took her suitcase and they turned and walked down the hill.

'You needn't worry about Sue,' he said, 'because that's off.'

'Oh, Joe, not because of—'

'Not because of anything. Because some people are show people and some aren't. We are, she isn't, that's the end of it. Damn soft idea, anyway, getting married. I've got the show and the people I like and I'm used to, and I've got my home. What else do I want?'

'You want your supper,' she said, wiping the tears out of her eyes, smiling at him. 'Come on inside and have some food.'

**O**N Sunday morning they packed up and moved out of Lyncastle early. Jimmy Moran and his mother, going home from Mass, saw the line of trucks and the vans rolling away up the London Road. 'Frith's Is Here Again' the big van said, but what it really meant was 'Frith's has gone again,' and Jimmy watched it gloomily. The vans came past them, close in to the pavement. 'Oh, look, mum, look, there's Mr Frith in front and the Fat Lady behind! Mum, wave to them, quick!'

The line of trucks passed by, and left Jimmy and his mother on the kerb. 'They never waved, mum,' Jimmy said tearfully. 'The Fat Lady was smiling, but she never saw me at all.'

'They wouldn't be expecting you, love,' his mother said gently. 'They can't always

be looking out for us, you know. They've got their own lives to live.'

She had given him a new and comforting idea. He stood in the road, with his Sunday boots planted wide apart, and gazed after the convoy. 'I bet they have marvellous lives,' he said.



## 'The Almighty Fandango

A. R. CALTOFEN

THE Lord made the world within six days. On the seventh he went to Algarve to rest there. That is the story people of Algarve will tell you, full of respectful pride.

I have always greatly wished to see a wanderer arrive there one day, at the top of the range of Algarve, where, after having passed the desert of Alentejo, suddenly, deep under his feet, there will be spread this rich and magic district. I am convinced that he would take off his black sombrero with the huge brim, clasp his hands, and say to himself: 'That certainly will be Paradise!'

Portugal is a wonderful country, but none of all its provinces is so full of magic as Algarve—Algarve, the Andalusia of Portugal. Tropical plants climb up the steep slopes of the heights. In the plain flourish all those delicious fruits which only southern countries can produce. Everywhere grapes are growing. They will later yield that strong red southern wine, of which it is said that it has been made of sun-rays turned liquid. The whole region is a vast garden, a garden where very often blossoms and fruits are hanging from the same branch. Myrtles and heliotropes form high hedges. Before each house you will find geraniums and camellias. Wherever you go there will be waving at you thousands of

colours like jewels, everywhere there will be wafted towards you scents of balsam.

This seems to be the Happy Land where flowers are blooming for ever, where pain and death are unknown. Days come full of light, and full of light they leave. The sky is shining with an eternal and sunny brightness. For ever a silver sea is moving with lovely sounds, while the fabulous purple grottos are dreaming. The golden sands are dreaming too. This blessed corner of the earth is never gripped by a hoar-frost. It knows nothing of snow, except the snow of blossoms. It seldom rains, and there is never, never any mist. Never a storm strikes a leaf. Hate and malign intention are completely unknown. Yes, the Arabs were right. It is really the Land of God, this Algarve.

THE people are just like their brothers and sisters on the other side of the Guadiana river. They are no less God's children, even if they do not talk so often of God and his good saints as do their countrymen in the north. They also pray much less, and they do not go very often to the churches and chapels. They live like the flowers and birds and butterflies around them. They flourish

## THE ALMIGHTY FANDANGO

and sing and dance from an unconscious feeling of sincere gratitude and from a pure animal joy in being alive with the flowers and birds and butterflies. I believe that this is the prayer their creator likes best. To-morrow there will be a new day, to-morrow the sun will shine again, and again the sea will give forth many, many fishes, and again the trees will yield figs and cherimoyas, oranges and lemons, almonds, olives, and carobs. If they ever should forget to do so, there would always be thorn-bushes and cactuses inviting you to be their guests. Say, is that not enough reason for feeling happy that you are alive?

Whenever the people of Algarve are happy they feel like singing and dancing. They do not need precious clothes to do so. One of these attractive young village-girls, she just takes a blossom from the nearest shrub and puts it into her bluish-black hair. A nice neckcloth, a nice apron, and, in addition to that, the gift of God, her southern charm—and the 'queen' is ready. There need not necessarily always be a fair on. A guitar, a pair of castanets, a dark boy with burning eyes, together with the festival shine of the southern sun or the beautiful light of the star-spangled sky—and the dancing-hall will be ready too. And as soon as the guitar begins playing everyone starts moving and dancing—even little children, who have just learned to walk, and even very old people, who have already forgotten how to walk. They like their dances more than anything else in the world. Especially their fandango.

And who would like this kind of dancing better than our friend Elycio? In case you want to hear more about Elycio, please note that he tells everybody who wants to know—and likewise those who do not want to know—that he is the very esteemed friend of our family. And surely half of Algarve has learned the way in which we celebrated my birthday. On that very day Elycio first came to see us. It was not that we had invited Elycio—but he came into our house limping and in company of his two crutches. His honest eyes were shining like very black pearls. Being a hidalgo, in spite of his wearing a torn sombrero and fragile straw slippers, he introduced himself in a solemn manner, saying: 'I am Elycio, the beggar.'

Since that time we have been honoured by his visits again and again, with intervals of a few days. He is, then, sitting at the entrance

of the door and is glad of being alive and of the world being so wonderful, and he eats his meal with an air of dignity and distinction. 'Have you perhaps a bit of tunny, which you could give me, senhor? But please boil it, if possible, for you should know that I like boiled tunny best of all.' No, he is not timid, our friend Elycio, but he would never become bold either. Besides, he knows very well that we like him very much, and that we also like his stories. His memory is full of stories, fairy-tales, and jokes. It was he who, when eating a plate of tunny and quaffing draughts of wine, told us the story of the fandango on trial.

**S**INCE the time when the Holy Father in Rome intended to forbid the fandango, many centuries have passed. He was angry because he thought the fandango so very shocking. Especially he was angry that this dance was so popular in Spain and Portugal, countries famous, both, in the Christian world for their religious belief and good behaviour. This virtuous behaviour had even been extolled in Holy Rome itself. Many bishops and many other ecclesiastical dignitaries were accordingly called to Rome, when there was opened a fandango trial.

The priests were already beginning to count the votes cast when one of the judges suggested that they would not be acting in the true Christian manner if sentence were pronounced against the poor fandango without having heard whatever was to be said in its defence. The Holy Father in his sense of justice was of the opinion that the judge had spoken very wisely, and he had letters written to Spain and Portugal. Even if usually both countries were not on very friendly terms, it was different in this case. So the journey to Rome was made by a charming Andalusian boy and a charming Andalusian girl in company of a boy and a girl from Algarve who were no less charming. A guitar was struck, and before the eyes of the pious fathers the four began dancing the bewitching fandango. In watching it, even the severe judges could not resist any longer. Slowly the wrinkles on their foreheads smoothed out and gradually all the sinister-looking faces became friendly. And, suddenly, it was as if Oberon's horn had been sounded. At first there was one who began to beat time with his foot, then there was another who did the same, and very soon

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hands and heads were moving rhythmically too. For a start they moved surreptitiously, but very shortly quite openly. One of the fathers got up, then a second, then another, and all at once there was a whirl: they were all moving, all spinning round, and the consistory became a dancing-hall—and the Fandango was saved.

That was the story Elysio told us—and he took the responsibility for its truth. He said he had learned this story from his father, who had in his turn learned it from his father. . . .

**T**HREE was one summer evening which was especially delightful. Everyone had worked very diligently throughout the day. The men had been fishing in the sea, catching sturgeons and soles from early in the morning until late in the evening, while the women had been picking green figs in the gardens. They, too, had been working from early in the morning until late in the evening. Dom Elysio was sitting at the entrance to our house and was talking as usual, eating the while a plate of tunny and drinking a glass of wine. Down at the shore they were playing music. Discreet and soft sounds full of longing at first were conjured out of the strings of the guitars. But soon the players change to a merry and jubilant note. Then they begin singing. In their songs there are smiles and mockery, there is flattering and kissing, and added to all is the full and deep voice of the castanets.

And all at once they are dancing. A young boy and a young girl. The girl is alluring, refusing, acting her magic part. Her cheap clothes are suddenly transformed into wondrous attire, so splendid is the manner of her hovering and swishing her dress. And her feet, her bare feet, they are like independent beings, each with a soul of its own, and capable of laughing and weeping, of exulting and dying. They move up seductively and ever come back faithfully to earth again.

The boy waves and entices with the fascinating movement of his limbs. He goes through every phase of courtship, in pursuing, asking, entreating. The girl turns to him, her arms outspread. His dance becomes victorious and masterful, then subdued and tender, and at last he drops humbly on his knee before the girl. But she jeers and turns from him and dances away. And now the guitar strings are plucked more fiercely, and the whirling movement of the dance becomes wilder and wilder, too, until the whirling has become exaltation. The boy's circles are diminishing. He will not entreat the girl any more. He will attack and win her by force. The spectators urge the two on. They clap and trample, beating the time with their feet. Now the boy has seized the girl, now he grips her hands, now he pulls her into his arms, and now they are dancing bosom to bosom in a happy dance of love. Suddenly the melody dies down—the intoxication of happiness has gone.

A second pair comes out to start the same dance. From now on many pairs are dancing at the same time. The children too—like fairies they glide over the sand under the velvety moonshine. It was wonderful beyond words to look on at their dancing. I had been looking for a long time. Then suddenly I remembered Elysio, about whom I had completely forgotten. Surely he would be sitting all alone by himself at the entrance of the house, the poor cripple. Surely his honest black eyes would be full of tears once more. I ran down from the granary, and as I was running I decided to give him a glass of good wine by way of consolation. But as soon as I set eyes on him I immediately turned back, for I would not disturb him or make him feel ashamed. There were leaning against the door-post two lonely crutches, and outside in the garden, under the discreet branches of our big camphor-tree, there was our Elysio, dancing the fandango, slim and nimble like a young god.

## For J.

*If home is where the heart is,  
My home is far away,  
So far that those who go there,  
If go, they needs must stay.*

*No visitor returns thence  
To bring me news of home.  
My home is where my heart is—  
A stranger here, I roam.*

IDA M. ALCOCK.



## Guide Dogs for the Blind

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N. LIAKHOFF

CAN you imagine a blind person alone, travelling to an entirely unknown town on business, staying to a theatre in the evening, and returning home safely, unaided and without any difficulty or mental fatigue? Probably you cannot, but it is possible, and it is done with the help of a guide dog.

Not very many years ago the world of blind people was psychologically separated from the rest of us. They could only communicate with us by speech, and even this was limited, because the number of people they came in contact with was necessarily small. Every blind man lived very much in his own shell, persecuted by constant expressions of sympathy, by a feeling of inferiority, and by the fact that he was deserving of pity.

The Braille alphabet was the first great achievement towards bringing blind people out of their watertight compartment, by giving them the chance of sharing our intellectual life. But much more remained to be done. For their movement, the blind continued to be wholly dependent on those who could see. Wherever they went they must always be accompanied by a human guide, so they could have no freedom of decision when or where they would go. They must still feel the embarrassment of having to ask someone to accompany them, must still always be indebted to their guides. They still had the depressing feeling of helplessness and the great psychological handicap of having at all times to share their private lives and interests with their guides. Then an animal, a dog, came into the

picture and made it possible for the blind person to be independent in his movement, to be master of his own time, to be able to have his own privacy.

MANY people picture a blind man led by a guide dog as a blind beggar on the corner of the street having a small yapping mongrel terrier on a string—a pitiful picture. No, that is not a guide dog. A proper guide dog is of a fair size, a good-looking, well-cared-for animal. His attachment to the man is a well-constructed and well-fitted harness, which the blind man holds. The dog walks at the side of his master and they are so united that often you do not realise that you are watching a blind man being led by a dog. The only clue is the special harness, which may attract attention.

Every movement of the dog is felt by the sensitive hand of the blind man through the harness and they steer easily together, among crowds and through traffic. The dog stops at kerbs, steps, and turns. He avoids all obstacles, moving or stationary, low or high, leaving the pavement for a few yards when there is no room for his master to pass and returning to it immediately there is room again. The pair move quickly, confidently, happily—the man happy in his independence, the dog happy to lead and help his beloved master.

Dogs are used in many ways to help humanity, but this is the noblest service, the most responsible. While in other cases the

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dog acts in accordance with the orders of the man, in this work the dog is the master and the man acts on the dog's orders. These animals are gentle, but they are firm and clear and must be obeyed implicitly.

This use of the dog is new. In this country the practice was introduced some seventeen years ago in the face of scepticism, criticism, and, in some instances, even antagonism of seeing people. They did not understand how a dog could be given the responsibility for the life of a human being. But very gradually the dog has proved worthy of the trust, and an unsympathetic attitude has given place to admiration and support.

There are not enough guide dogs to meet the demand, but a considerable number of men and women from all classes and occupations already benefit by having them. A blind masseur, guided by a dog, has no difficulty in visiting his outside patients. A blind piano-tuner is no more handicapped by the necessity of having to try to find a guide for himself. A blind factory-worker—and many blind are employed in factories now—is always in time for his work no matter at what distance he lives from the factory. Among guide-dog owners there are people who have lost their sight and people who were born blind, there are civilians and ex-service men. They all either found an undreamed of independence or regained a great part of the independence they had lost.

THE training of guide dogs is a complicated matter. It is not every dog which can be trained or given such a responsibility. The first step of the organisation which supplies guide dogs is to select them, not in accordance with their pedigrees, or the number of prizes which have been won by their parents, but in accordance with their own intelligence and willingness to work. Willingness is the most important feature of the guide dog. While any dog, and any other animal for that matter, can be forced to do whatever its master wants, a guide dog, being the master itself, must like to be master, must enjoy its work.

The method of training is based on one principle. The dog must be made to understand that he and his master are one. It must realise that it is no use trying to pass through a space where the dog can go easily but where there is no room for the man. A way must be found where there is enough room for both.

It is no use to attempt to dash across a road among moving traffic. The dog must calculate so that there is time, safe time, for the crossing to be made steadily.

The training of a dog lasts usually about three months. The trainer, when he takes a fresh dog, is a man with full sight, but by degrees, as the dog's training progresses, the man pretends to lose his sight, so that in due course if the dog does not stop at a kerb, the trainer will stumble over it as if he had not seen it. If the dog goes too near a post or tree, the trainer will not try to avoid it but will bump into it.

The final test consists of a walk with a trainer who is blindfolded, or of being handed over temporarily to a blind man who acts as a tester. Even the slightest suspicion of inefficiency will prevent the dog passing the test.

Then the future master comes to the training centre and both man and dog are trained together. There is a lot for the blind man to learn, the most important of all being that he must gain full confidence in the dog. You would imagine this would be difficult, but actually this confidence comes in an amazingly short time. A few walks with the dog, hearing people pass and not touching them, hearing the children approaching in their prams and passing them without any slackening of speed, crossing the roads amongst traffic, are enough. Soon full and lasting confidence is given.

Here is a letter showing how well founded this confidence is. It is written by the wife of a guide-dog owner who lost his sight during the First World War:

'Primarily this letter is to tell you of a very great feat Marshall performed yesterday.

'We live not very far away from the main road to York; the river divides us from it, over which is a large bridge. After my husband had gone out for his walk, we heard an awful crash and I ran out to see an Army jeep hanging over into the river, having torn up part of the road. Half the bridge had collapsed and most of the debris had been flung back into the roadway. Girders and masonry were all over the place.

'My next-door neighbour said: "What are you going to do?" So I decided I would go along and meet my husband.

'Whilst debating what time to go, which way, etc., along came my husband with Marshall, quite unconcerned. So I said to him: "How did you get over the bridge?" and he answered:

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"The same way as I always do. Marshall seemed to take me a bit wide, I thought, but it may have been there was a pram there in the way."

"Do you know, that delightful dog had

brought him right away from everything and never let him touch a thing, not even a stone. Later my son took him along and let him feel the great hole in the bridge and all the trimmings."



# No Regrets

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PETER LINGTON

WARDILLON fired five times at a tiny patch of snow on the grey shale across the river. At each shot the echoes rebounded across and across the deep valley and the snow spurted till there was nothing left for him to aim at. Satisfied with the sighting of his rifle, he carried it back to his tent.

His servant, Gul Nawaz, son of an Afghan trader and a Tibetan woman, brought a kettle of boiling water. 'That was good, Sahib,' he remarked, his russet-hued face split and crinkled in a broad smile. 'By God, that was very good. You shoot better than you did thirty years ago.'

Wardillon rubbed the grey stubble of his beard and poured the boiling water carefully down the rifle-barrel. 'I am growing old, Gul Nawaz,' he said. 'When I have been climbing an hour or two my heart thumps so that the rifle shakes like a reed in the wind.' Gul Nawaz shook his head sadly and went to make tea.

Having cleaned his rifle, Wardillon squinted

down the flawless barrel and put the weapon away in its shabby case. There it would stay till they reached the hills along the Tibetan border, for he had walked four hundred miles to obtain just one head of *ovis ammon*, the great Tibetan sheep—not any ammon, but one particular ram whom he had hunted for three seasons without once approaching within range; one enormous ram whom he had come to know so well that he had called him 'Nyang,' which is the Tibetan name for the species. He had no wish to kill the lesser sheep and ibex of the sad-coloured hills and glaciers of the upper Indus and Shyok valleys, and, superstitious like all hunters, he had a hunch that it would spoil his luck to shoot at any game other than Nyang himself. This was his last chance, his last trek in the high Himalayas. Next season he would be eating pension and digging his garden in Hampshire—but if the massive horns of Nyang hung above his study mantelpiece he would be content never to fire another shot.

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Gul Nawaz brought tea. Since the camp was sheltered from the wind and the sun had not yet dropped behind the jagged peaks of the great mountains, Wardillon spread his sheepskin coat and sat in the open, leaning against a smooth rock.

Gul Nawaz said: 'What will you have for dinner, Sahib?'

'Take the gun and shoot two or three chikor.'

'Very good. And for pudding?'

'What is there for pudding, Gul Nawaz?'

'Sahib, there are dried apricots again.'

Wardillon said solemnly: 'For pudding, brother, I desire a trifle made of luscious fruits and "such sweet jams, meticulously jarred, as God's own Prophet eats in Paradise."

Gul Nawaz chuckled, his slit eyes almost disappearing behind high cheekbones. 'Sahib, for pudding you will have dried apricots.'

He took the shotgun and climbed steadily over the tiny, terraced fields, moving with a hillman's smooth rhythm.

LUXURIOUSLY tired after a twenty-mile march, Wardillon leaned back, plucking the ragged strips of skin from his sunburnt face and forehead. Thank God his lips were almost healed! He lit a pipe and raised his field-glasses. Far above the valley a black dot moved across a tongue of snow, and he counted fifteen bharal picking their way diagonally down the dark shale slope. In the steeper, broken ground to the left a party of five male ibex was grazing; one seemed to have a good head.

He shivered, for the sun had dropped below the mountain, and already a white mist was rising from the river. As he shrugged himself into his sheepskin coat he saw a line of laden yaks and pack-ponies filing along the path below him. Riding at their head were three men festooned with rifles and cameras. 'God damn it!' cried Wardillon, who had not seen a white man for a month. 'One might as well be in Piccadilly!' He shouted to Gul Nawaz to hurry back and make tea, and walked down, clumsy in long felt camp-boots, to meet the newcomers.

Their leader wore dark glasses and a short check jacket such as Wardillon had seen advertised in American papers. The sun and wind had ravaged the man's plump face, which was covered with oozing sores and shining with ointment. 'Doctor Livingstone,

I presume?' greeted Wardillon, reaching out a fur-gloved hand. 'I guess you're Colonel Wardillon. We heard of you in Leh. I'm Randall E. Skinner. Meet my brother Howard, and my friend Mr John Heidekker. Pleased to make your acquaintance, Colonel.'

'How d'ye do? Come and have some tea while your fellows pitch camp,' invited Wardillon.

'Delighted, Colonel. Have you had good hunting? We heard some shots a while ago.'

'Just practice, but I see you've been at it already.' Two bharal were tied across the backs of pack-animals, and Wardillon's bushy eyebrows drew together in an ominous scowl as he saw the diminutive horns.

'Why, sure, Howard shot a brace to-day.'

'They should be tender eating,' Wardillon remarked. 'An old ram's devilish tough.' But the sarcasm was wasted.

At Wardillon's tent they dismounted stiffly and looked round for chairs and tables. But Wardillon was a poor man, travelling light, sleeping and eating on the ground. So they sent for their own camp furniture and drank cup after cup of strong, sweet tea, lacing it from the flasks they carried with them.

After inviting Wardillon to supper, they walked down to their own camp. The wind had dropped, and their words came clearly back to Wardillon through the still, cold air. 'Funny old guy, huh? Guess he's just living on tea and flapjacks.'

'Say, I thought that was a servant's tent!'

'Yeah. More like a dog's kennel, I guess. Game old geezer, though.'

Soon Gul Nawaz came to report. 'They have seven Kashmiri camp servants, Sahib. Also wonderful rifles with little telescopes on top. Doubtless they are weak-eyed.'

'They must have travelled fast,' Wardillon pointed out, 'to catch up with us. I wonder why they are in such a hurry.'

Gul Nawaz grunted scornfully. 'They have ridden every yard of the way, but we grey-beards have marched.'

Gul Nawaz swaggered off, and Wardillon crouched over the little fire. Though he loved this bare, treeless trans-Himalaya, often in the evening he longed for the roaring campfires of the forest country. Here the only fuel was dried dung and the woody roots of the burtse shrub, laboriously gathered in the course of the day's march, giving a bright flame but little heat.

As Wardillon walked down the hill to

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supper, the torchlight dancing in front of him, it was so cold that it hurt to draw in a full breath. Nevertheless, he lingered on the smell of the yak-dung fires, storing it in his memory for the years ahead. From down the valley came a wolf's sobbing howl, and all the village dogs answered her.

In Skinner's big tent were patent pressure-lamps, and tablecloths, cocktails, and a wonderful variety of tinned and preserved food. Wardillon asked where they were going, and what game they sought. 'Guess we're just mooching around, Colonel,' replied Skinner. 'Maybe we'll go down Rupshu way. We've a block reserved there.'

It was odd that they had come so far north if they were planning to shoot in Rupshu, but so long as they kept south of the Indus they would be out of his way.

'Splendid country!' Wardillon said. 'Splendid! You'll probably pick up Tibetan gazelle, as well as ammon and bharal. Have a look at the monastery at Hanle, and remember me to the old abbot. The Tso Morari is worth a visit, too; you may find bar-headed geese breeding there. Then you could take a chukkar round and see the devil-dancing at Himmis; you'd get some good film subjects there.'

'Yeah. Yeah, I guess that sounds a good itinerary. Where will you be?'

'Oh, just pottering about in Changchenmo. I want a good bharal.'

**T**WO hours before dawn, Gul Nawaz shook Wardillon awake. 'Sahib! Sahib! I have news.'

Wardillon sat up and sipped the scalding tea. 'What news?'

'Sahib, their shikari knows about Nyang, and is taking them to Changchenmo to hunt him. That is why they are double-marching —to get there first. And they plan to set out very early in the morning, without letting us know.'

Wardillon's breath came quickly with anger. What the devil did a record ammon matter to these . . . these tourists, these boozy slaughterers of baby bharal. Was he to be robbed of his prize by a bunch of bloated, perambulating bank-balances? He crawled, fully dressed, out of his sleeping-bag, and pulled on his boots. 'We march at once,' he ordered.

'Sahib, we cannot race them, for they are

young men and have good Yarkandi horses. But if they think we are out of the running they will go slowly, for they are tired.'

'H'm. I see. They will march upstream, cross by the wooden bridge at Tangse, and then skirt the shores of the Pangong Tso. So we must go downstream, up the Changchenmo river, and into Nyang's country from the north. But where can we cross over except at Tangse?'

Gul Nawaz gripped his arm. 'Sahib, there is but one place. The rope-bridge.'

The rope-bridge! The thing Wardillon feared most in all the world! He still had nightmares of the time he slipped, crossing a rope-bridge in Baltistan, and hung by his hands for terrifying minutes till Gul Nawaz pulled him to safety. He swallowed hard, nodded and said: 'All right. Leave the old tent pitched here so that they won't realise we have gone.'

In the grey light of dawn Wardillon stood barefoot, shivering at the end of the rope-bridge. From bank to bank it stretched, a foot-rope and two hand-ropes, two hundred feet long, hanging in a perfect curve and swaying gently in the wind. Far below swirled the green-grey snow-broth of the river. Wardillon felt that nothing, *nothing* would induce him to set foot on it. Gul Nawaz was eyeing him anxiously. 'Sahib, let me carry you across blindfold,' he urged.

'God damn you!' snarled Wardillon, and took the first, irrevocable step. Once committed, he must go forward, for it was impossible to turn back without letting go the widespread hand-ropes. At every step the bridge sagged and swayed, and all the time he saw the greedy river below. When he stepped on to firm ground on the far side he was pouring with sweat and his quivering legs gave way beneath him.

**F**OUR days later Wardillon turned south and faced the long climb to the watershed which overlooked Nyang's summer grazing-ground. For some miles Gul Nawaz and he followed a stream, marching easily on the frozen surface. Then they took the narrow path which zig-zagged up to the pass.

On this, the last stage of his long march, Wardillon felt a return of the joy which had eluded him since he met Skinner. These hills, rank after rank of monstrous grey and khaki downs, bleak and windswept, he loved even

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more than the steep, jagged mountains he had left behind him. The scanty scrub in the stream-bed, the clear-cut skyline, the haphazard streaks and patches of snow, the thin grass, pushing between the stones like hairs through leprosy—all these he would remember long after he had forgotten tamer beauties.

He sat down and lit his pipe, screening the match from the wind, which, blowing all day across these sombre uplands, lashed his face with fine particles of grit. In the sun it was almost warm, and he basked gratefully, for, climbing at 17,000 feet, he was glad of a rest. He would wait a while for the baggage to catch up. A snow-cock whistled forlornly and glided down the valley.

A family of Champas, Tibetan nomad shepherds, filed down the path with their flock, the goats and sheep carrying little packs of salt and borax. The Champas wore greasy skins and winged fur-hats, and smiled shyly at the stranger. 'Ju lé!' called Wardillon in cheerful greeting. 'Nyang? See Nyang?'

They nodded and grinned, and said, 'Ju! Ju lé! Nyang!' They made gestures indicating great numbers and huge horns.

Gul Nawaz, striding up the path, addressed them in fluent Tibetan. 'They saw four ammon rams yesterday,' he reported, 'and the leader was the father of all ammon.'

'A Champa is the father of all liars,' replied Wardillon. 'I am going straight up to the cairn.' He pointed to the heap of stones and animals' skulls, decorated with Buddhist prayer-flags, which marked the top of the pass. 'Bring on the yaks, and we shall camp at the first water we come to on the far side.'

Very early next morning they set off, labouring uphill with aching limbs and pounding hearts, stopping to pant and fill their lungs with the thin, cold air. At dawn they reached a vantage-point, sat down among some rocks which would break up their outline, put on the coats they had shed during the climb, pulled the Balaclavas over their ears and set to work with telescope and field-glasses.

For half-an-hour Wardillon saw no living creature. Then, far away, three yellowish specks moved across a dun hillside. He reached for the telescope. 'Ammon, Sahib?' asked Gul Nawaz. But Wardillon identified them as wild asses and shook his head, disappointed.

Twenty minutes later Gul Nawaz said: 'I think . . . yes, Sahib, I think I spy ammon. You see the pale streak on the hill yonder?

O-o-over there! You see the patch of snow like a dog's head, at the top of the pale streak? Look four o'clock of the patch of snow.'

Wardillon stared and stared at the blank, empty hillside. At last something moved, and he saw that the whole hill was covered with animals. 'Ammon,' he said at length. 'Two dozen, at least. And two rams, a little to the right of the herd.'

'But not big ones, Sahib. We shall not find Nyang with his wives at this season.'

So it was for three days while they quartered the ground, moving from ridge to ridge, their baggage following behind and below them. Ammon they saw in plenty, and bharal, and wild yaks. Once three wolves loped past not fifty yards away. Once they saw a snow-leopard slink up a ravine, but even then Wardillon would not shoot. There was no sign of Nyang, the father of all ammon.

On the fourth day Wardillon and Gul Nawaz sat, as was their custom, near the top of a hill but just below the skyline, sheltered from the moaning wind and patiently searching every ridge and valley. Suddenly Gul Nawaz clicked his tongue, and Wardillon knew that their search was over. A quarter-mile away four ammon rams climbed slowly out of a shallow depression and loafed up a ridge. There was no mistaking the leader: his coat was almost white, and his huge horns made a full circle on each side of his head.

The hunters, in full view, sat as still as the rocks around them. At last the rams moved out of sight. 'Praise God!' cried Gul Nawaz piously, and they ran quickly down the hill and climbed up the far side in the tracks of their quarry.

Wardillon had never been so confident. The rams were upwind, had not seen them, and were moving slowly. Surely, when he reached the top, he would find Nyang within range. He paused for a moment below the crest to recover his breath, checked the sighting of his rifle, and crawled up, peering cautiously round a low burste bush. It was a false crest, so he wriggled on till suddenly the valley unrolled to his gaze. There were the ammon rams, strung out in single file at full gallop, with Nyang in the rear, labouring under the weight of his splendid horns. 'Tobah! Tobah!' moaned Gul Nawaz. 'Shoot, Sahib, shoot, in the name of God!'

Wardillon shook his head. Already the

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ammon were four hundred yards away, and a shot might wound, or drive Nyang over the Tibetan border, which Wardillon had signed an undertaking not to cross.

But what had alarmed them? No mistake of his, he felt sure. He heard Gul Nawaz mutter a stream of curses and, looking over his shoulder, saw his yaks with their Tibetan herdsman standing right on top of the hill, outlined against the sky, peering in the direction of the hunt.

For four or five miles they followed the ammon; then pitched camp by a frozen stream. 'Where shall we seek them tomorrow?' asked Wardillon.

Gul Nawaz shrugged his shoulders. 'God knows. The devil protects Nyang. Perhaps he will go a hundred miles; perhaps he has halted in the next valley.'

'I think,' said Wardillon, 'he will make for the high ground this side of Niagzu.'

'Perhaps,' grunted Gul Nawaz. 'Perhaps he will go to the Pangong Tso. Who knows? The Niagzu water is brackish,' he added, 'and it is the coldest spot in the world.'

'Be off with you till you've finished sulking! And don't beat the yak-men, or they will run away and leave us stranded.'

For once there was ample firewood, for the scrub grew thick in the network of streams and rivulets. So when the sun was low, and the valley gripped in deathly cold, Wardillon sat by a roaring fire, reading a tattered Shakespeare. '"*The multitudinous seas incarnadine*,"' he repeated, rolling the words over his tongue—

"The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red."

Suddenly he heard a well-remembered voice behind him. 'Say, it's Doctor Livingstone! And spouting poetry, too! My, my! I never took you for a highbrow.'

Wardillon swore beneath his breath as he turned with outstretched hand and welcoming smile. 'Why, Skinner, I never expected to see you in Changchenmo.'

'Yeah, quite a coincidence, isn't it? We thought we'd come up here and maybe pick up two-three antelope.'

'H'm. They don't usually come in as early as this.'

'Well, well! What d'you know about that? Did his eyelid drop in the suspicion of a wink? Damn the fellow!'

Wardillon spread a sheepskin on the frozen

ground and called for tea. Skinner sank down, groaning. 'Thanks, Colonel. Say, this god-damned wind gets me down. Don't it ever stop?'

Next morning Wardillon slipped away before the Americans' cumbersome caravan had got moving. He thought they might follow him, but in the evening a Champa herdsman told him they had pitched camp some seven miles away.

THREE days later, early in the morning, Wardillon made out four animals crossing the skyline far to the east. The sun shone into the lens of his telescope, so that he could not see them clearly, but they did not seem to have the distinctive pale legs of the wild ass, and even at this distance they looked too heavily-built for ewes.

An hour later he and Gul Nawaz reached the spot where the animals had disappeared over the crest. Here they scouted forward with every precaution, searching the ground with infinite care before exposing themselves. In this manner they made slow progress, and it was midday when they saw the ammon again, calmly grazing up the next ridge.

Of the leader, there could be no doubt that this was Nyang. Wardillon gasped at the spread and sweep of his horns.

'Fifty inches . . . fifty-five, perhaps,' muttered Gul Nawaz. 'Can you take the shot from the rocks above them?'

'Provided this damned wind doesn't shift. But it will take us two hours to get there. We must go right round the top of the valley, to keep out of sight.'

'No matter,' said Gul Nawaz. 'See, one or two are lying down already. They will stay here till late afternoon, *inshallah*.'

They had neither steep nor rough ground to cover, but at that height it was a long and weary grind for a man of Wardillon's age. When they eventually reached the rocks, Wardillon lay behind them for fully five minutes, breathing deeply till he felt he could hold a steady aim. Then he crept slowly forward.

It was some time before he spotted the rams, but at last one moved and gave away their position. Through his field-glasses Wardillon picked out the leader; but Nyang, lying down, presented a poor target. Wardillon got into the firing position and waited patiently for him to rise. He had caught up

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with the ammon on the last ridge of Kashmir territory. Beyond lay their sanctuary, in Tibet. The rams were lying near the skyline, a hundred yards from safety.

Wardillon heard from behind the clink of one stone against another. Turning round, he saw Skinner and a Kashmiri shikari toiling up the hill, making for the very rocks where he lay hiding. Gul Nawaz flicked a pebble down at them, and a look of exasperated chagrin came over Skinner's face, followed by a wry grimace of resignation. He raised his hand in salute and sank to the ground, acknowledging defeat.

Suddenly generous, Wardillon beckoned him up. It was foolish, for two men were more likely to be seen than one, but it was only fair to give Skinner a sight of Nyang, and perhaps the chance of a shot if he himself missed. 'For crying out loud!' whispered Skinner, lying beside him. 'Did you ever see such horns?'

On a common impulse the rams stood up. Wardillon raised his rifle, but Nyang was masked by one of the younger animals. They climbed slowly up the hill, jostling each other as they squeezed between two big rocks. Then the fight started. There was a quick flurry, a haze of dust, and the big ram ran down the hill, chivied by the others. Wardillon stared in amazement, for it was not the season when rams usually fight, but there was no doubt that these were in earnest. The young rams butted Nyang savagely as he retreated. He broke clear and swerved to one side, so that he was no longer below them. Then he

charged, meeting one of his enemies squarely, head to head. The horns clashed with a report like a rifle-shot, and the young ram was flung off his feet; but Nyang was still hard-pressed by the others.

'Say!' breathed Skinner. 'Look how they're ganging up on him.' Wardillon watched, fascinated, as the rams charged and skirmished. Nyang was indomitable, and none of the others could stand his charge. At last they drew off, leaving the victor grandly in possession of the field. 'Gee! The old hero!' murmured Skinner.

Wardillon raised his rifle and aimed at the clear, easy target. He was quite calm now, and the foresight rested steadily on Nyang's shoulder. At that moment he thought of all the good years of hunting and adventure which the great ram, his magnificent horns silhouetted against the pale sky, seemed to symbolise. Like Wardillon himself, Nyang had just won against three younger rivals. Alive, Nyang was king of a thousand miles of windswept uplands: dead, he would serve only to decorate an old man's study.

Deliberately, Wardillon raised his foresight and put his shot over the ram's back. Nyang gave a convulsive plunge and galloped over the crest into safety. Wardillon said ruefully: 'Well, that's that! I'm too old for these heights . . . can't hold steady any more.' But his shining eyes belied his words.

'You don't say, Colonel. Now I was reckoning that was the best shot you ever did.' And Skinner held out his hand in congratulation.

## Guile

*My love enslaves me with capricious mood,  
The promise fades which lately was sublime,  
And long-declining hope with strength renewed  
Confers the sudden bounty of its prime.  
All understanding does she circumvent,  
Red lips repel though winning smiles caress;  
Her tone reproves with obdurate intent  
For which some softer nuance brings redress.  
Those changing eyes with constant riddles glow  
As with a dream at waking, dim recalled,  
Whose fragments in elusive ebb and flow  
Bemuse the head yet hold the heart enthralled.  
Mistress is she of all complexity,  
So I have none of her—she all of me.*

ARTHUR TURCK.



## Gramophone-Record Collecting

RONALD HASTINGS

MOST of us have the collecting bug in some form or another. In fact, lives are long enough, and enthusiasms strong enough, for us to indulge several collecting hobbies at different ages. As a child, like most others, I went in for cigarette-cards, then stamps, model-railways, and finally, about sixteen, for gramophone-records. In the years which have followed I have watched this enthusiasm withstand frantic eagerness, with the inevitable reactions of disinterest. I have watched it weather desert periods thousands of miles from what I regard as civilisation—that is, where music is played, opera is sung, and cricket is a pleasant rest between acts. I have watched it flame into life again every time it has been repatriated, and practically consume its owner every time Zenatello is mentioned. To put it briefly, I have enjoyed record collecting, and I hope to spend a good bit longer turning over dusty piles of weighty rubbish behind washstands in back-street junk-shops.

We record collectors feel that our hobby has an immense, indeed supreme, advantage over all others. We have every difficulty, all the hard work and all the pleasures shared by other collectors, but when we get the treasure home we can sharpen up a thorn needle, switch on, and listen to our find. Try that with your foreign stamps and old china. We regard ourselves as the only sane collectors, admitting those looking for music-boxes as half-members. But, truly, those others grubbing around after bits of coloured glass,

old metal, tiny pieces of used paper, and fancy china have eaten of the insane root that takes the reason prisoner.

New records, of course, are outside our discussion. The field is further narrowed down by the mechanical limitations which prevented any performers other than singers from doing themselves justice until recent years. The records, therefore, with which a collector will concern himself will, almost without exception, be deleted vocals, both acoustically and electrically recorded. For people like myself the older records have an attraction apart from the beauty of the singing, which in nine cases out of ten far surpasses anything done since, and apart from the value of rarity which appeals to the collector. By some reversal of progress, these records made acoustically give a far better impression of the singer's actual voice than those made later electrically.

The reason is not far to seek. Think of the recording processes. In one, a horn, which took the sound straight on to the record; in the other, a microphone, miles of wiring, and heaven knows how many knobs and controls all getting between the voice and the listener. It is undeniable that the old acoustics do give one a feeling of proximity which the later records fail to give. Similarly, you will often meet people who will tell you that, for vocal records, the best reproducer is one with a sound-box and a large horn. If the truth be told, I have said it myself more than once.

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SEARCHING for records takes one into a variety of places, from junk-shops which look as if they had not sold a fire-iron for twenty years, through very keen, small dealers, to the big men who know what they've got, what they want, and what it's worth.

If you have simply pots of money there is not much point in going to any but the few high-class dealers. They will either have what you want, or, in most cases, can get it for you. Moreover, the records you buy there will be in first-rate condition, as near new as you are likely to find. But if, like the majority of collectors, your desire exceeds your pocket, or you prefer to do your own digging, you will be a happier man, with a thousand badly-lit caves to discover and examine. Without any doubt these places provide the red-letter days, the purple patches, in a collector's life. Your luck may be spread very thin, with long blanks during which you will grow sick of the sight of a record label, but, as with football pools and crosswords, there's always the chance of something really big just around the corner.

About the time of the beginning of the late war I was sent by my office down to Sittingbourne every Wednesday to man the branch office, which opened only on that day. As the branch inspector and his wife provided me with my midday meal, I was able to pocket my 3s. allowance, plus, sometimes, the 2s. bus-fare, when I got a lift in a car. These valuable shillings I put to good use—for, down at Sittingbourne, I had discovered a gold-mine. At the far end of the town was a second-hand furniture shop which had recently taken in a small pile of very old records. They were given a uniform price of 6d. each. Every Wednesday, after balancing the cash, I hurried off to this dark, dirty place and put down as many sixpences as I could afford. Unfortunately the seam gave out after two or three visits, but while it lasted I gained a good Tetrazzini, a Galli-Curci, a lovely Selma Kurz, a fine Gadski-Amato duet, and a magnificent Battistini, as well as several other records, by Alma Gluck, Louise Homer, and Frieda Hempel.

Every collector can recall such experiences. A few years later I was serving with the R.A.F. in Ceylon. Through flying too high with a cold, I developed a bit of ear trouble, which took me to Kandy every few weeks for medical examination. These two-day breaks—even the day each way in the bug-ridden trains

—made very pleasant holidays. So I did it in style, staying at the Queen's Hotel, with tea, the morning papers, and a slice of a melon-like object brought up to me in bed.

One morning, in the large rooms adjoining the hotel, I noticed movements of interest—loads of furniture being brought in, and all the many objects that a large, wealthy household disgorges when it is broken up. Being always on the lookout, I waited until the dust settled, then had a nose round. I was expecting one or two records of the usual '1930-dance' type, but ran into a Columbia album holding the complete recording of *Manon*, a fine set just up for deletion. Nothing could have surprised me more in the heart of Ceylon. The set contained eighteen light-blue label records and was worth about four guineas. I put it to the auctioneer that no one out there would want that stuff, and that I would be doing him a favour by offering him thirteen rupees (about 19s. 6d.) for it before the sale opened. He took it.

A week later I booked the large station cinema for a night, typed out, individually, fifty programmes, with notes about the story, and put on *Manon*. It went down very well. One man had seen the opera in Brussels shortly before the war and had been enchanted by it. He had never heard it since, and told me that my recording brought back all the nearly-forgotten charm. So that was worth doing.

I could go on for ever with experiences like that. For instance, the two old dears who keep a shop in the town where I now live. I had bought half-a-dozen good records from them very cheaply and was talking about my purchase to a friend in another record dealer's. 'They don't seem to have much idea of the value of their stuff,' I remarked. 'Don't you believe it,' he replied, and asked me what I had bought and how much. 'Yes, that's about right,' he said, when I had told him. 'They've been keeping that shop for twenty or thirty years and they know what they're doing. They read all the record magazines and price-lists but refuse to put any price on a record on the score of rarity or deletion. Their stuff is always about a half to two-thirds what it would be new.' What an astonishing old-world pair! According to their philosophy they would part with a golden sovereign for exactly twenty shillings rather than get the market three or four pounds, but there it is.

## GRAMOPHONE-RECORD COLLECTING

BEFORE setting out you must know about the records you may find. At a glance, for example, you must be able to tell whether any record out of many thousands has been deleted from the current catalogue. This is much easier than it sounds at first mention. In any case, from your point of view, practically everything that's worth having is deleted.

Another necessary task if you are to be able to judge values is a regular study of the price-lists which the big dealers put in the record magazines. When studying these lists and comparing them with your local prices, however, remember that the dealers' records are justifiably a little dearer. They buy nothing but the best. So your local price should be cheaper.

In this hobby the condition of the record is everything. Look for the close, whitened lines and heavy scoring which tells that a record has been ground to death by steel needles. Hold it up at an angle to the light and study every inch for cracks and scars. Then hear it played. Buying a second-hand record is very much like buying a second-hand car. Have a good look, then have a good listen. Unless the record is extremely rare, or you have a particular need for it, never, never buy a worn copy. It is much better to wait. I don't know how many times I have hurriedly grabbed a worn copy I badly wanted, only to find, a few days later, a perfect one at about the same price. In spite of years of experience, and this heavy advice, it has, I am ashamed to admit, happened twice this year already.

The people you will meet will be as nice as you could wish for, like all collectors only too willing to have a long chat about recent discoveries. The dealers I have always found most helpful, and you should never hesitate to give a list, not too long, of your requirements to any you get to know. They see many

more records than you do, and it is much easier for them to get you a decent copy.

As you sort through the piles, don't only look for the big names. You will find plenty of Carusos and Galli-Curcis. Keep an eye open for the lesser-known ones also. To give two examples, I never miss Tino Pattiera, a tenor on the cheaper, pre-war black Parlophone labels, or Sydney Rayner on pre-war Deccas. Remember, too, that even the greatest singers made many records for smaller companies. H.M.V., Columbia, Parlophone (including Odeons), Decca (including Polydors) are not the only fish in the sea. Carusos, McCormacks, Schipas can be found on rarer labels. There again, even among the big companies, don't get into the bad habit of ignoring everything except red and light-blue labels. Alessandro Valente's now increasingly popular and valuable records were made on plum labels.

Altogether, it is a wonderful hobby, full of pleasant, lasting experiences. Just one more to end. A newly-trained and commissioned member of R.A.F. aircrew, I was stuck one Christmas up in the snows of Moncton, New Brunswick. Having, unfortunately, been separated from my friends, I was not feeling in exactly the traditional Christmas spirit. Wandering down on Christmas Eve to the little town, I dropped into one of the Service clubs for tea. There, tucked away out of sight in a corner, behind a radiogram, I unearthed the H.M.V. recording of *La Bohème*, the Giorgini one, which was replaced by the new Gigli. Keeping the volume down in terror lest the sound should annoy the others and call for my removal, I played the whole thing through twice that day, and once more early on Christmas morning, when I hurried to town from the camp a mile or so outside before anyone else could get into the club. The sunny voices of Giorgini, Badini, and Baccaloni warmed that chilly Christmas.

### Don of Magdalen

*A don, still fuddled and magdalen,  
Was charged with drunkenly dagdalen.  
They fined him a guinea,  
The foozled old nuinea,  
'Cos he couldn't pronounce it as Magdalen.*

GILBY BROOKS.



## Reindeer Trek

GEORGE INGLIS

FLOODED in moonlight, the Alaskan valley lay deep in snow and silence. Northward, the hedging hills climbed to the glistening heights of the Brooks Mountains, squeezing the long valley into the gap of Howard Pass. Southward, the valley opened and spread fan-like, a white, wide, wrinkled carpet of wind-swept snow. There was no sign of life; the only sound was the low moaning of the flickering wind which drifted down the Pass. In bad weather, when the Arctic blizzards beat against the northern slopes of the high Brooks range and their only release was through the slitlike entrance of the Pass, the screaming winds would erupt through the gap in a storming tumult, filling the Pass with darkness and the choking fury of fine, frozen snow.

But, this day, the Pass was quiet. The troubled moaning faded away. Then, from the south, a strange sound came over the snows—a faint, irregular click-click-clicking, like the rasping rattle of a winging horde of locusts. A wide, dull-brown smudge rose over the horizon and spilled slowly forward with a formless surge into the white valley. Around the edges of the smudge black dots darted hither and there, like shepherd-dogs driving a flock. As it drew closer, the smudge cleared and revealed itself—a mighty herd of reindeer moving under compulsion and control, forward and upward, towards the mountain-pass. The clicking came from the tendons in the reindeers' heels, which snapped as they walked.

This was the reindeer herd, three thousand

strong, which the Canadian Government had bought in 1929 so that the Eskimos in the empty lands which lie about and beyond the Mackenzie River delta could always eat. The reindeer were bought from the American Lomen Brothers, known as the 'Reindeer Kings.' The price of the deer was sixty-five dollars a head delivered in the Canadian corrals at Kittigazuit on the eastern banks of the Mackenzie River. And the only way to deliver the herd was to drive it.

By map and the way the crow flies, Kittigazuit was only a few hundred miles from the starting-point of the drive at Naboktoolik in north-western Alaska. But the way the herd was to take wound for over two thousand miles through narrow mountain-passes and across broad stretches of clutching Arctic boglands. Detours had to be made around the timber-belts, for the antlered reindeer could not travel among trees. Two years, it was thought, would be lots of time to complete the drive, yet summer and winter were to follow in quick succession until five years had passed before the long trek was over.

IT was about Christmastime in '29 that the chosen herd clicked their way out of the Kotzebue corrals and headed north into the cold, frozen hills. Policing them were four Laplanders, who were wise to the vagaries of the temperamental reindeer, and six Eskimo herders. In charge was a squat Laplander, Andy Bahr, a little roly-poly man of fifty-five,

## REINDEER TREK

with great endurance and intense energy. He was hardly five feet tall, yet he weighed two hundred pounds. And on his short Lapland skis he could move like a fairy.

Bahr will always be remembered in the North as the little man who persuaded three thousand reindeer to go where they didn't want to for two thousand miles. Reindeer have domesticated instincts and dislike to leave home. On such a journey any chance they could see to break away and return home they would take. So the herders stood twenty-four hour watches over the herd at all times. Bewildered and uneasy beneath the restraining guard of the herders, the reindeer travelled at less than grazing speed. At the end of three months they had covered one hundred and fifty miles—hardly two miles a day.

It was spring now. The tundra was soft and fawning-time was close, so the herd rested and fed on the thick, rich mosses beside the Kobuk River at the base of the Baird Mountains. Summer passed, the young fawns grew strong, and the reindeer laid across their rumps goodly layers of fat to help them live through the lean days of the fast-approaching winter. By November, the tundra was frozen again and the first snow had fallen. Kobuk's mossy carpet was threadbare after the summer grazing, so the herd needed no urging to cross the river and climb to new pastures. Progress was quicker now—from ten to twenty miles a day.

Day is used as a measure of time only, because up there at that time of the year there is no daylight, for there is no sun. But the crystals of thin, hard snow, catching and reflecting the brilliance of the stars, throw up a luminous glow. By means of it the reindeer and their herders were able to find their way. And each month the northern moon waxed and waned, and beneath the brightness the brown surge of the reindeer host spilled into the valley and drew towards the moaning heights of Howard Pass.

As the valley closed between the squeezing cliffs, the flanking herders and their dogs dropped to the rear and, with shouts and whips and crackling gunfire, they hurried the reluctant herd into the Pass. The wind grew stronger. Up and up and up the reindeer staggered in the face of the whistling, snow-filled wind: two, four, five thousand feet they climbed, midway to the glowering brows of the roaring mountains, ten thousand feet above. There was the summit of the Pass.

And there, also, was waiting the knock-out force of the gathering Arctic gale.

It was only the weight of packed numbers that carried the tired herd through that last bitter barricade of slashing wind and saltlike stinging snow, which bit deep into the reindeers' tough hides. Some of the outside deer were blown clean off their feet; others the half-blinded herders had to push and pull and carry over the summit. The weakest lay down and were buried in drifting snow before they had even time to die.

Once through the Pass, the herd dropped steadily down the northern slope towards the Arctic Ocean. They were coming now to the country of the black wolves, a low, flat, barren stretch of wasteland two hundred miles wide and no one knows how long. It was here, among the broken waves of drifted snow, that the black wolves prowled. Big, lean, vicious brutes, hunting in shadowy packs, they followed the wandering caribou herds as they pawed their way across the wastes of the Barren Lands.

The reindeer were afraid of wolves. The Lapps, knowing the danger of a stampede, grew more alert. Stragglers were rounded up. Tensely, the herders bunched the herd. The speed of the slowest became the speed of the trek. Then, one still, cold night it came—a thin, high, piercing howl, the signal-call of the hunting wolf that had caught a scent.

All hands turned out to fight the gathering wolves. The frightened reindeer began to mill. The weaker ones drew to the centre: the big, strong bucks formed an outer ring, and began to circle. As the wolves drew close, the circling bucks threw a barbed barrage of whirling antlers and flashing hooves in the face of the wolves.

It is the habit of wolf-packs to watch and wait until their quarry tires, and then to drive at them, break the circle, and hamstring the victims as they scatter. But, this night, that plan didn't work. With animals at sixty-five dollars a head and the journey half-completed, the herders had no intention of losing the reindeer. Around the circling herd they fought the wolves. Laying aside their guns, darting and twisting on their short skis, they outran the wolves in the tricky, sandlike snow, and broke their backs with swift, smashing blows from stubby clubs. One by one the death-howsls died away and, by morning, the panicked herd were calm and on the move once again.

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TWO more years slid by and the reindeer see-sawed slowly eastward through the unknown land. A gradual change came over the moving herd. The young grew up. Clusters of old ones deserted, dribbling to the rear and disappearing in storm and darkness; others ran away after a chance contact with the migrant caribou; the wolves took their sly toll; the winds and the holding boglands wore others out. Only a fragment of the original herd reached the Canadian corrals, but each fawning filled in the gaps, and as the deer drew close to the Mackenzie delta and their journey's end the herd bloomed to its best.

This was in April of 1933. The frozen Mackenzie River was breaking up. Huge cakes of ice ground their way downstream, and the tumbling, dark-brown waters spilled over the low banks and flooded the wide willow land which bordered the river. Tall, thick, and laced like the stitches in a sweater, these willows threw an unexpected, impenetrable barrier before the antlered herd. Among these willows the antlers of the reindeer would tangle and hold, and the herd would be like so many flies in a giant spider-web. So the reindeer were turned north to the bare shoreline of the Arctic Ocean, where they waited for another winter to come and for the ocean to freeze. Instead of making a short, easy river-crossing, they would have to move out on to the sea-ice and make a hundred-mile dash for the eastern shore.

It wasn't a pleasant prospect. The herders busied themselves in gathering and sacking a supply of mosses for the trip. It was late in December before the delta froze over. It was the third day of the new year when the herders started the reindeer over the ice. They travelled in darkness, for the moon had waned and the sun had not returned. For two days men and animals scratched and slithered over the ice until they reached a tiny island, hardly more than a sandbar. It was the halfway mark. A halt was called, a fire lighted, and the herders made tea. While they drank, one of them went out to take a look at the resting reindeer. He came back on the run, shouting. In the darkness, the herd had vanished. The reindeer didn't like the ice. They wanted land. So they faced about and bolted. Once started, there was no holding them. The herders could only follow after and wait until the stampeding deer played out. That stop for a cup of tea added another year to the

trek, for it was months before the scattered herd could be rounded up and poised for another attempt.

THIRTEEN months later, in the dark of a February morning, the herd set out again. Hesitant and awkward, their minds alight with memories of their earlier flight, the reluctant reindeer crept slowly out on to the frozen sea. The herders led decoy deer out in front and the main herd swarmed after. For once, the Arctic wind was still. Confidence came to the herd. Sensing it, the cunning little Laplanders loosed their decoy deer and whipped back to speed up the rear. The crawl grew to a walk and broke into a trot. By noon the reindeer had passed the spot of the last retreat. But there was no stopping for tea this time. And by nightfall the panting, heaving herd swung into the protection of the first island.

For the next two days the trail led along the narrow, winding water-channels between the myriad sandy islands of the wide delta. Mossless and barren, the islands could give nothing but shelter to the hungry herd. The sacks of moss the herders had carefully plucked and packed were soon emptied. And still between them and the thickly-mossed eastern shore there lay another wide stretch of open ice. Forty miles away rose the faint outlines of the moss-covered cliffs of Richard's Island, a short mile from the eastern mainland. But they were too far for the herd to see. Snow began to fall.

The spent reindeer began to lag. The youngsters bleated piteously, the elders wobbled on weary legs—the herd was about to quit. They halted and gaped helplessly around. Frantically the shouting herders rushed among them trying to excite and stir forward the exhausted herd. They knew that once the reindeer lay down on the open ice they were doomed, for the Arctic storms come quick as a falcon's flight, and the blizzard would obliterate the crumpled herd in less than thirty minutes.

The first fitful puffs of the coming storm ruffled the herd. In dismay the herders stopped and fell silent. Then, the miracle happened. The reindeer rose as one animal, pointed their broad noses eastward, and with quick, short, eager grunts walked forward into the storm. The rising wind had wafted to the worn-out herd the heartening scent of the mainland

## THANK YOU, THOMAS

mosses, and by nightfall they had struggled to safety on Richard's Island.

Days later, as the blizzard died and daylight came again, the placid herd crossed the

narrow channel to the mainland and ambled into a fenced enclosure which drew them after their five years' trek into the waiting corrals of Kittigazuit.



# *Thank You, Thomas*

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### DESMOND CLARKE

THE two old ladies sat silently in their straight wing-chairs before a small miserable fire that gave little heat to the large room. Despite the dirty-parchment colour of their faces and the black lines drawn by the years, there was no mistaking their obvious refinement and gentle breeding—they were ladies, and though the drab sombreness of their outmoded attire might belie the fact, it could not conceal it.

The room in which they sat, though airless and heavy with the dusty smell of an old junk-shop, retained a semblance of graciousness. The thick curtains lapped over the windows were heavy and dust-laden; the cretonne-covered armchairs with their side wings lacked modern comfort; the small inlaid table between the two armchairs, and the great mirror filling one wall, heavy with its ornate frame of dull tarnished gilt, were relics of another age.

The old ladies sat stiffly and decorously upright patiently embroidering. They both wore black mittens which covered half their

hands, and their thin delicate fingers worked slowly, stiff with years and rheumatism. Their chairs were inclined somewhat towards the poor light of a gas-lamp suspended from a high, richly-decorated ceiling; the greater part of the room was in shadow, so that the paintings hanging on the wall were but darker patches in the dull-coloured wallpaper.

From behind and beyond the heavily-curtained windows there came the harsh raucous sounds of the street—the maudlin singing of drunken men, the screeching and shouting of children, all the unharmonious medley of sounds associated with a slummy street. The noisy, jarring clamour did not greatly disturb the old ladies. Over the years they had grown used to it, and accepted it with patient resignation. It was not the life they had known in the past, so they chose as far as possible to ignore it, even though it ringed about them and encroached to their doorstep like sand flowing about a small oasis. This house was their home, and the street was a street of quality when they were

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growing up. The house still harboured the ghosts and memories of the past, though the ghosts and memories had long deserted the street and the houses that were stripped of their glory.

Tessa, the younger of the two sisters, eased herself in her chair, and looked at her sister Emma, who was breathing somewhat labouredly, like one going to sleep. Emma's eyes were heavy-lidded behind her spectacles and she kept blinking. Tessa stared her hard for a moment or two, taking in at a glance the long dress of black silky material, the white lace collar, and the white shawl thrown carelessly about her sister's shoulders. Emma's face was strongly masculine, her lips rather thick, and as her mouth hung open the hairy growth on her chin was accentuated in the light; her forehead was very broad, and the thin grey hair combed severely back made it appear broader still.

Almost unconsciously Tessa turned slightly in her chair and looked at herself in the long mirror which reflected the whole room like a dull, unclear picture. She could see herself in the picture, dressed in black, more sombre in appearance than Emma, for the shawl had fallen from about her shoulders and the strip of lace across her bosom was lost in the dull, unclear picture; she could see the white hair bunched about her head, and her thinner desiccated features torn with dark lines; she looked older, much older, than Emma, and the thought made her frown a little. Tessa resumed her needlework and laid some threads across the pattern to match the colours.

Emma began to nod in her chair. Her sewing hands dropped slowly to her lap and lay there quiescent; her head jerked back once or twice involuntarily, and then, as it fell slightly forward, a pleasant smile creased the parchment-coloured skin of her face. Sleep was pleasant, for it bridged the gap of years. Back, back she went tumbling, forty, fifty, sixty years; she was a small girl again all dressed in white and waiting impatiently for the sound of her father's carriage in the street outside. She was running down the stairs now, fearful she might trip in her hurry but eager to be at the door when her father arrived. The houseboy, Thomas, was waiting in the hall; he smiled at her, but she disdained to return his smile, for the boy was full of his own importance, standing impressively in his new jacket with its gleaming silver buttons.

Thomas!

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EMMA stirred with a start, looking quickly round the room. The unmusically metallic sound of the door-bell ran hollow through the house, creating a noisome jangle; the bell rang loudly in the basement but its clangorous urgency reverberated through the house. 'Oh!' Emma cried, shaking her head. 'It . . . it must be Thomas. He went out a moment ago.'

Tessa looked at her sister, startled for a moment. She frowned. 'You've been sleeping, my dear,' she said.

'But the bell? It is still ringing.'

'I know. I know,' Tessa replied impatiently, 'but it is only those horrid children again.' In her mind's eye she could see the ragged children careering down the street and one after another giving a vicious tug to the old bell-handle, the sole one remaining in the street.

Emma slowly drew her fingers down her face. 'No, it is Thomas. I am sure it is,' she persisted.

Tessa gave a harsh little laugh. 'My dear,' she began patiently, 'Thomas left us before papa died—that is more than fifty years ago. He . . . he is possibly dead by now.'

Emma ignored her sister. 'I do wish that girl would answer the door,' she said with some annoyance.

'She has opened it too often, only to be jeered at,' Tessa said quietly, and she turned her attention to her needlework.

Emma got up from her chair, a little awkward and stiff, and pulled the knob set in the wall by the marble fireplace. She could hear the faint ring of the bell in the kitchen, and then the loud clangour of the door-bell. The maid came into the room and stood sullenly by the door. 'Why don't you answer the bell?' Emma asked irritably, and when she looked at the girl she was disgusted with her appearance. The girl was young; she was slattern and untidy, a smudge of black like a finger-streak was drawn across her cheek, her not-so-white cap sat crookedly on her head, and her hair fell wispyly from underneath it. 'Why don't you answer the door?' Emma asked again.

'Cause it's only the childer, ma'am,' the girl answered. 'Aren't they ever and always ringin' the ou'l bell. A regular pack of savages, that's what they are,' she said bitterly.

'I don't want to hear about the children. You just answer the door now,' Emma told her.

## THANK YOU, THOMAS

'Yes, ma'am,' the girl replied sulkily, and then, in an aside: 'I'm fed up with this place entirely.'

Emma grunted, her face red with anger. 'Young people don't know their proper place nowadays,' she said.

'Don't go on so, Emma,' Tessa pleaded. 'It doesn't do to cross a servant. Remember it is not easy to get them now. They don't want to live in this street, or at least in these big houses,' she added quickly.

'I know. I know,' Emma said, nodding her head resignedly. The edge had worn from her voice and in its place there was a tone of frustration and sadness. For a moment the past and present swayed delicately before her, and a long procession of servants whom she had known passed before her eyes, and there were others whom she did not know but felt she ought to know, for they were the servants who served her father and his father before that, back to the days when the merchant princes of the city, and the leading men of bar, bench, and learning built these fine city houses and paid the Kauffmans and Joneses to lavish their skill and talent in beautifying them.

The maid entered the room again. 'There's a gentleman outside that wants to see you,' she announced, indifferently.

'A gentleman?' Emma said, ruffling her brow in a puzzled expression.

'Did he wish to see anyone in particular?' Tessa asked.

The girl made a face. 'He said Miss Emma or Miss Tessa.'

'Well, show him in,' Emma directed her. 'Show him in, and don't stand there gaping foolishly as if I had six heads.'

THE two old sisters sat with their eyes fixed on the partly-open door. There was a vague puzzled expression on each face as though they were both striving desperately to hazard a guess as to who their visitor might be. Neither spoke a single word, and when the door opened fully they still stared unashamedly, their grey uncertain eyes fixed on the bent, withered old man who entered the room. He stood inside the door holding a shiny bowler-hat in front of him, both his hands loosely clasping the brim. He was dressed neatly and cleanly in a long black overcoat that reached to the ground; the overcoat had a velvet collar.

The old man looked from one of the sisters to the other, uncertain. His eyes were narrowed and almost hidden under bushy white eyebrows. For a moment he seemed puzzled, as though he had found himself in the wrong house, and his head twisted from side to side in a quick nervous movement. Then a weak little smile broke out on his lined face, and the toothless gums of his mouth showed when his lips parted as if saying something.

Emma peered at him over the tops of her glasses. 'Well, my good man, you want to see us?' she asked, slightly annoyed that the stranger had not spoken or moved from where he stood by the door.

He nodded his head up and down. 'You are the Miss Owenses? Miss Emma and Miss Tessa?' he said. They both answered together. 'Ah dear,' he sighed gratefully, 'I thought for a moment I had made a mistake.' Then he added with a foolish little grin: 'You . . . you remember me? Thomas . . . Thomas Burke?' He held his head a little to one side, a patient little smile on his face.

'Thomas!' Emma cried, her eyes opening wide as if they were jumping from her head, and in her hurry to rise from her chair her needlework spilled from her lap and the steel-rimmed glasses from the bridge of her nose. Tessa opened her mouth as if to speak, but no words came from her.

The old man moved slowly to pick up the things Emma had dropped. Whilst he stooped slowly and stiffly, Emma's lips parted in an appreciative smile of thanks; the little service struck a familiar chord in the dusty cupboard of her mind. 'Thank you, Thomas,' she said quietly, and she repeated the words a second time, lingering over them lovingly as she might with a favourite line of poetry.

Thomas stood looking from one sister to the other as if trying to tear away the misty veil of years which had changed and distorted the faces of Miss Emma and Miss Tessa so that they were no longer recognisable. Vaguely he wondered if he was dreaming, suddenly transported into surroundings familiar indeed but peopled by strangers whom he never knew. Yes, the room was familiar: the high Adam's ceiling dim in the faint light, the great marble Bossi mantelpiece, the ornamental mirror over it, the pictures hanging on the wall—all so familiar, unchanged by the passing years.

Tessa was speaking to the old man.

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'Won't you sit down, Thomas?' she said, indicating her own chair.

The old man shook himself alive. 'You... you sit there, Miss Tessa,' he said.

'Get yourself a chair,' Emma told him.

Thomas looked at her doubtfully. 'You don't mind?' he asked.

'Of course not,' Emma assured him.

'Indeed no,' Tessa said in support of her sister.

Thomas took a chair and placed it in front of the pale, sickly fire. He fixed his gaze on the dull tarnished gilt of the overmantel. An uncomfortable silence fell upon the room, a silence accentuated by the street noises feebly pouring through the curtained windows and by the hissing sound of the lighted gas-jet. The two sisters sat still, a little uncomfortable it seemed and not knowing what to say. Covertly they inspected the old man. They could see that he was neatly dressed; his boots were polished and the light glinted on them; the ends of his trousers showed a sharp crease under the bottom of his great-coat, with its velvet collar; he held his bowler-hat in both hands and was slowly revolving it around and around absently.

AT length the old man broke the silence. 'The room has not changed,' he said, 'not changed a bit since I was here last.'

Emma gave her head a little shake. 'No, Thomas, we have left everything as the master had it. It is a link with the past and keeps his memory before us.'

'Yes,' Thomas said, only giving half his attention to what Emma said; then turning towards her he remarked: 'I did not think you or Miss Tessa were still living here.'

'No?' Emma frowned.

'I called before,' Thomas said, but he did not tell how as an old, retired man, with time to spare, curiosity guided his footsteps to the street of fine tall houses he had known as a youth. He did not speak of the shock he experienced when he saw the changes about him—fine, comfortable houses now become overcrowded and drab tenements. As he had walked up and down the street identifying familiar homes and weaving his way in and out through the hordes of children playing on the footpath, the yellow-lighted, uncurtained windows were as a hundred eyes reflecting a thousand crude and intimate facets of the teeming tenement life. Women

spilled over, blowzy, from the windows, their hair disarrayed and untidy; children huddled in groups on the floors of the rooms or lay heaped together in a single bed; all the little intimacies and privacies of life seemed to Thomas to be crudely and harshly focused in the shining eyes of windows.

'You called before?' Emma said.

'Yes, I rang the bell, but there was no answer,' Thomas replied. 'To-night I asked a... a little boy, and he told me you lived here,' and with a little pain he recalled the answer the tattered street-arab gave: 'Aye, two ou' wans live there, but they're half-cracked, mister.'

'The girl won't answer the door at times,' Emma remarked, apologetically.

'It is the children, Thomas. They never cease tugging the bell,' Tessa volunteered. 'I cannot understand why they don't leave us alone,' she added a little sadly.

'Yes, indeed, but I am afraid they don't know any better,' Thomas said, feeling genuinely sorry for the two old ladies still clinging to their old home despite the revolutionary changes about them. There was something pathetic, too, in Tessa's almost despairing plea to be left alone. Looking about him and then picturing for a moment the street outside, Thomas could not but pity the two old ladies living in their world of make-believe, clinging feebly to a home and a life long departed, two lone outcasts left on the beach long after the tide which overwhelmed all else had receded.

'You will have a cup of tea, Thomas?' Emma asked.

'Please don't trouble, Miss Emma.'

'But you must, Thomas,' Tessa insisted.

'I am sorry we cannot offer you a drink, Thomas.' Emma was softly apologetic. 'We entertain very little nowadays,' she added.

'Very few people do,' Thomas told her consolingly.

'It is so expensive,' Tessa said.

'Of course, it was different when the master was alive,' Emma went on as though nobody had spoken.

Thomas nodded his head and smiled. 'Yes, indeed, Miss Emma,' he said brightly. 'Many a night I laid the table for twenty or thirty people. Many a night indeed.'

Emma's face lightened and Tessa leaned slightly forward in her chair. 'We used to be sent off to bed early, Thomas,' Emma recalled. 'But, oh, Thomas, you were always

## THANK YOU, THOMAS

up to some little game. Do you remember the night you brought the oysters to the nursery? You must have been a very naughty boy.' Thomas grinned, and hung his head.

'Do you remember the night, Thomas, you came into us with Judge Bodkin's top-hat on your head and his cloak about your shoulders, looking for all the world like the devil from *Faust*?' Tessa cried excitedly and not to be outdone by her sister.

'Yes. Yes,' Thomas said, recollecting bit by bit the far-off days when he first started his working life as a houseboy in this home of Serjeant Owens. He was a shy, hungry lad then, and he remembered clearly the day when the butler rigged him out with a tight-fitting jacket faced with black braid and gold buttons; the butler then tied a green woollen apron about his middle and showed him how to polish the different drinking-glasses, impressing on his mind what glasses were used for serving sherry, claret, port, and numerous other drinks. Thomas recalled the names of all the servants; he remembered the master and the mistress, and more particularly he remembered the two mischievous little girls, Miss Emma and Miss Tessa, who often forgot their station in life and so made his hard, fully-occupied life a little more pleasant and human. He shook his head, somewhat sadly, to see the two lovely girls now lonely old spinsters, living with their memories; and the great house in which he had worked as a young boy was but a mausoleum standing irresolutely on the brink of decay.

EMMA rang the house bell insistently, tugging it impatiently. At the same time she gave all her attention to the old man's reminiscences, laughing when he recollected some funny episode and brushing the small tears from her eyes when he spoke of somebody who had passed away. Tessa laughed, too, and wept a little, hiding her tears in her bowed head. Soon the room began to fill with people. They crowded from the darkened corners, from the dull unclear pictures, from the shadowed ceiling; they opened the door silently and gathered around the walls; they laughed and talked; they ate and drank. The world which an hour before was strangely unreal came to life again. The noisy raucous sounds rising from the street, the noises and sounds of the unreal world stopped before they reached the window, so that only the

clatter of the cabs and coaches driving over the cobbled street crept quietly into the room.

For a moment, when the drab servant-girl opened the door and stood inelegantly in the room, was the spell broken, and it seemed as though the cloak of make-believe had fallen away, leaving everybody naked and uncomfortable. 'You rang the bell, ma'am?' the servant asked, addressing nobody in particular.

'Oh!' Emma looked up in surprise.

'Bring some tea; a few sandwiches and some cake, too,' Tessa said sharply, without looking around.

As soon as the girl had gone, the two sisters turned to Thomas and quickly plied him with questions as if they wished to hurry over the brief uncomfortable interlude and gather up again the threads which reached back into the past. The old man talked agreeably, happy in his reminiscent mood. He dug out age-encrusted names from the grave of memory and clothed them with life; he recalled scenes that were forgotten and blotted out with the clouding dust of years, and with a word or two he brushed the dust aside and all the world was young and gay.

The fire in the grate had burned itself out, but neither Emma nor Tessa noticed it, nor did they feel the cold of the night, or the lateness of the hour. They were both excited, and a warm glow of colour appeared on their yellow parchment-like cheeks, as if painted there by an not-too-skilled artist.

The maid brought in a small tray and placed it on the table beside Emma. The cups were old, but neat and dainty; so, too, the silver teapot, the milk-jug, and the sugar-bowl. A few ill-cut sandwiches, exuding a reddish-coloured jam, and a finger or two of seed-cake seemed incongruous on the tray.

'Is that all?' the maid asked, and Tessa dismissed her with a decisive nod of her head.

The tea Tessa poured out was pale and watery, and the old man took the proffered cup very carefully in his shaky hands. 'Eat away now, Thomas,' Emma said, and she spoke as one offering a meal to a hungry man, and there was a certain solicitousness in her voice as though she was overcome with pity and yet pleased to be charitable.

Thomas took the bread and jam sandwich; it was unappetising, and he nibbled it without relish. Whilst he was sipping the hot watery tea somewhat noisily he did not notice that Tessa had left the room, and it was not until

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the door opened behind him and she called Emma in a soft whisper that he realised that she was no longer sitting in her chair. Emma got up from her chair, excusing herself. 'Drink your tea now, Thomas, and eat up all that,' she said as she left him to join her sister.

Thomas gathered up the few sandwiches quickly and furtively, and folding them in his handkerchief he slipped them into his pocket. He laid his cup aside and let his gaze wander round the room. In sixty years nothing appeared to have changed. From the walls hung the same pictures, dust-encumbered now, that he had dusted each day as a boy; the same delicate rosewood furniture stood around, only chipped and scored by the carelessness of years; the candle-brackets on the wall were interlaced now with a thickening veil of cobwebs. It seemed strange to Thomas to be in the room again that looked so much like what it was in the past, but still he could see that the weight of years hung heavily about the place, so that the room was old and worn and decrepit like a fading, helpless old man. Whilst Thomas stared at the dead fireplace, lost in thought and nursing a deep feeling of pity for the old sisters who clung so desperately to the past and managed somehow to live untouched by the changed life about them, the door opened almost noiselessly behind him, and but for the sudden little burst of unmusical laughter he might not have stirred. Unthinking, he turned and looked, and then gazed, unable to believe his own eyes.

'WE are being presented to-night, Thomas,' Emma announced, and her voice was strangely disguised.

Tessa smirked and held her head down.

Thomas continued to gaze at the two sisters standing before him in white court-dresses yellowing with age and smelling strongly of camphor. He swallowed hard. 'You . . . you are beautiful, Miss Emma, and you, too, Miss Tessa,' he said, and when he had uttered the words he realised how untrue they were, for the two old sisters were ugly and looked foolish and stupid in gowns fashioned for young supple bodies.

'You said that before, Thomas,' Emma reminded him, her eyes opening wide, and a glowing smile covering her old withered face.

'Yes, Thomas, you did!' Tessa cried. '"You are beautiful, Miss Emma, and you,

too, Miss Tessa.'" She repeated the words slowly and lovingly, her eyes fixed ecstatically.

Thomas nodded his head thoughtfully, and smilingly kept on looking at the two sisters as if transfixed by their loveliness. For a moment or two he noticed how the white silk gowns hung loosely about their bent and breastless bodies and swept the floor in an untidy heap about their feet. Then his old grey eyes misted over, and the billowy white gowns were as lustre shrouding bodies that were beautiful and lovely.

'We are all ready, just waiting for the carriage, Thomas,' Emma said, and her voice trembled excitedly.

'I do hope papa won't be late,' Tessa said, and she squeezed her white gloved hands together over her unlovely breasts.

Thomas walked slowly across the room and turned off the gaslight. Then he parted the heavy curtains over one of the windows just as he had done sixty years before. He stood by the window looking out. The two sisters walked slowly to where he stood, their gowns sweeping the floor with a soft, silky rustle.

The teeming world of the tenements was black in sleep, no lights broke yellow and staring from the uncurtained or half-curtained windows, and the doors that hung crookedly open by day were closed against the night. A bright moon bathed the street in a strong light and the tall houses opposite touched the lighted sky; the street lights were extinguished, and the soft warm light of the moon was kind and gentle to the crumbling Georgian mansion.

'Judge Rutherford lives over there; he will be going to the Castle to-night,' Thomas said softly, his finger pointed to the house opposite.

'Yes,' Emma said, excited, and Tessa purred beside her.

'The City Recorder lives in the house on the right,' Thomas went on, 'and your old friend Dr Gatesby, with his great red beard, lives on the left.' He turned to Tessa. 'The Doctor says he is going to marry you when you grow up.'

'I'll not have him, then,' Tessa said with a defiant jerk of her head. 'You mustn't say things like that, Thomas.'

Thomas restrained a smile. 'Mr Bronton, the Crown Solicitor, lives beside him, and down there—the fourth house away, Mr Medlar, the Queen's Counsellor. . . .'

They stood for a long time by the window, listening. The moon paled and the tall houses merged into the blackness of the

## INNS OF THE CHINA ROAD

clouds, and a heavy darkness fell over the street.

'You must be tired, Miss Emma, and you, too, Miss Tessa,' Thomas said with a soft little sigh.

'We are tired, Thomas, aren't we, Tessa?' Emma said, her voice still happy and joyous.

'Yes,' Tessa admitted, adding, 'It was lovely, Thomas. Lovely.'

'I am sure,' Thomas said.

'We have kept you up waiting, but you can lie late in the morning, Thomas,' Emma told him.

'Thank you, Miss Emma,' he said, gravely.

He waited whilst the two old ladies padded out of the darkened room. He heard the

rustle of their gowns as they went slowly and heavily up the stairs. Then, very quietly, he drew the heavy curtains across the window and stole as noiselessly as he could through the hall. He opened the hall-door and closed it gently behind him.

It was cold out in the street and Thomas shivered. A gust of wind lifted a tin can and sent it rattling noisily along the road. A drunk leaning against the railings was sick on the steps, and somewhere across the road an infant cried with hunger. Thomas turned and looked back at the tall house, then he walked slowly down the street, knowing the old sisters were sleeping peacefully, their court-gowns spread neatly and carefully over the backs of their bedroom chairs.



## Inns of the China Road

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### BERNARD LLEWELLYN

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THE night I found a scorpion on the wall at the head of my bed was neither better nor worse than a hundred and one other nights spent in Chinese inns. True, it was a memorable night; but then there were many such deep in the heart of the continent, in forgotten villages which straddled some road that coiled about the hills like the endless tail of a celestial dragon.

Chinese inns resembled punctuation marks in the narrative of one's travels. They were the climax of eventful days among the mountains, refuges from mud and rain or from a hot scorching sun that threatened to set the tin-work of one's vehicle on fire.

Most of the West China inns were built of wood and roofed with tiles. Occasionally they had plaster walls which gave the impression of being stronger than they were.

They appeared almost to have sprung up overnight—eating and sleeping places which had opened soon after the road itself to meet the needs of travellers. Sometimes the whole of the main street of a country town would seem to consist of nothing but inns, and as you drove into the town a representative from each would wave at you from the roadside and shout the excellence of his rice and beds.

Unless you had previous knowledge gained from earlier adventures on that same road, choosing an inn was a haphazard business. You could go by the smell of the food, which would be cooking, as likely as not, in the little walled-off kitchen just across the threshold, where you would see pieces of meat and a selection of vegetables suspended from hooks in the rafters of the ceiling. If the inn looked reasonably clean and the food smelt

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good and you liked the appearance of the landlord, you would probably decide to eat there, and sleep, too, if there was room.

Sometimes, of course, in a mountain hamlet there was no choice, whether you liked the look of the landlord or not. One of the most villainous-looking men I ever saw was the proprietor of the only restaurant among a cluster of houses on a bandit-infested road in a corner of Kweichow province. He had long black moustaches and a leer which Tod Slaughter would have envied—but there was nowhere else to go!

**W**HEN you got to the inn the first thing you did was to wash. A servant lad would bring in basins of hot water and face-cloths—which, if you were wise, you avoided using—and set them down on one of the restaurant tables. Here you carried out your ablutions in full view of other diners and of the passers-by in the street outside.

The latter usually collected in a vast throng when they saw a foreigner washing—especially if he happened to have lathered his face preparatory to shaving, for the majority of Chinese perform no such ritual—until they were driven away by the landlord, who rushed about pretending that he was quite used to the odd ways of the men from over the water.

When you had rid yourself of the dust of the road and sat down, the food was brought on, piping hot, and tasting more delicious than any roadside meal you could find anywhere else in the world. Slices of fried chicken, liver and onions, fried eggs, bean sprouts, noodles in delicious soup, and, if the inn was near a big river, a whole fish cooked in a sauce of surpassing excellence—such were the dishes you got in Chinese inns to add flavour to the bowls of steaming rice which provided the main body of the meal. By the time the tea-bowls were brought in you were generally contented enough, and ready for a stroll among the lights and shadows of the town before retiring for the night.

**T**HE retiring was the snag in most Chinese inns. The beds were nothing like so good as the food. You didn't often find scorpions; but nearly always you found bugs, and on those occasions the bugs had little difficulty in finding you.

The worst night I ever had with bugs was

in a little inn at a village called Ma Chan P'ing on the hilly road between Kweiyang and the railway-line leading to South-East China. I was assured with great earnestness by the landlord that there were no bugs in *his* inn. He held up his dirty hands in protest at my suggestion that there might be.

In no other inn did I ever see so many. They came in droves from every crevice in my plank bed. Every time I switched on my torch I saw them racing for cover, and you could never move quickly enough to get more than two or three each time: the rest vanished into cracks between the boards. They had to be picked up individually between finger and thumb, thrown on to the floor, and scraped with a boot heel into a dark red streak.

Not all inns were so bad; and there has grown up in my mind a composite picture of the typical inn, made up of bits and pieces of scores of unpretentious lodgings where I was benighted on Chinese roads.

The bedrooms were usually at the top of a rickety wooden staircase leading up from the room where you ate. They were about the size of a ship's cabin, separated from each other by thin plaster walls or an even thinner wooden partition.

Illumination was provided by a small flat dish of vegetable-oil, over the edge of which a lighted end of wick would be hanging. There would be a little table and one or two simple chairs or stools, as likely enough made of bamboo; and on the table a cracked china teapot containing drinking water, and a couple of tiny tea-bowls in case you wanted to entertain a friend or clean your teeth.

The bed contained single eiderdown quilt or *p'ou kai*, which you could use in place of your own bedding if you were the adventurous type. The windows seldom had glass, but the wooden lattice was covered by torn rice-paper, which kept out some at least of the night air.

In such a room would the traveller retire for the night, and even sleep comfortably enough if the bugs had sated themselves on the blood of the last occupant. Even if they had not, the cautious and experienced traveller still had a chance of comfort. An oilskin groundsheet beneath the bedding disconcerted most bugs. Then, if the occupier liberally sprinkled DDT powder around the bed and camouflaged himself inside a well-tucked-in mosquito-net, he might well escape the worst. More than that the philosophic traveller who sojourned in Chinese inns never hoped to do.



## *The Achanavig Feud*

A. FORREST

IN the Hebridean village of Achanavig a bitter feud had been waged between the families of Murray and Gunn for as long as could be remembered. The feud had become part and parcel of the daily life of the village, just as were the Free Church minister and the ghost of Duncan Bàn who haunted the Black Loch.

Everybody knew the ups and downs of this continuous quarrel. At times the enmity subsided somewhat and, though the families were never on speaking terms, their relationship took on a passive form. War was still waged, but it was a war of inaction—of ugly looks and dangerous thoughts. But at other times the feud burst into activity again. Tempers rose and there were cruel fights; guttural sounds of quarrelling in Gaelic were heard; an uneasy, menacing threat entered the peaceful village life.

Thus it was that, thirty years ago, when evening gossip round the peat-fires lagged, one sure way of reviving the dying embers of conversation was to mention the Murray-Gunn feud, being careful, of course, that there was no member of either family present to take offence.

NO one in the village knew the exact origin of the quarrel. There were many theories on the subject, but no definite knowledge. Some said that, generations ago, a Murray and a Gunn had loved the same woman, that she had spurned them both, and that each had blamed the other for the failure of his wooing.

Mr Murdoch, the schoolmaster, agreed with this theory. He said he had read a story to that effect in a folklore book of the district—but what the Murrays and Gunns were doing in a book no one could fathom. Mr Murdoch didn't explain that mystery. He was more concerned with the woman in the case. He insisted that she was a fairy or a mermaid—he couldn't remember which. Only of one thing was he positive—she was no mere mortal.

Do you think the Achanavig folk believed a word of this fairy nonsense? Not they! Talk of that sort was all very well for children and people like Mr Murdoch who had been to College and believed all they read in books. They listened to him, however, very politely, with serious faces, muttering: 'Well, well, are you telling me so!', or 'Och, och, who would

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have thought it!' They were too well mannered to contradict such a great scholar. They had, indeed, a genuine respect for all Mr Murdoch said and did.

When speaking of the feud, Mr Murdoch used to say: "'It cam' wi' a lass, and it will gang wi' a lass!'" But this pronouncement was quite lost on the Achanavig folk, who habitually spoke Gaelic unless circumstances compelled them to speak stilted book English. Thus they wondered why Mr Murdoch was talking about the minister's dog, who answered to the strange foreign-sounding name of 'Lass.' But, of course, they agreed with him as usual, for, if he was not talking about the minister's 'Lass,' no doubt he was quoting some Greek or Latin proverb well worth hearing—if folk only had his learning and could make head or tail of it.

There were some in Achanavig, however—women—despisers mostly—who simply would not believe that a woman had been at the root of such deadly enmity. These were inclined to lay the blame on some more vital issue—peats, potatoes, cows, or even hens. But women—never! What sensible family would quarrel for generations over a woman! Still, the most of folk knew from experience what a lot of stir and trouble even the most insignificant chit of a woman could cause on occasion, and these accepted the woman theory readily enough.

**F**AITE, or, as the minister would have said, 'the hand of the Lord,' had placed the Murray and Gunn crofts side by side. One might have supposed that this proximity would in time have lessened the hatred between the families. But, if anything, it had had the opposite effect.

No sooner had a Gunn or a Murray left his wooden cradle and began to toddle after his mother to the well for water or to chase the hens from the corn than he was taught to recognise his natural enemy. And many generations grew up and grew old carrying with them this hatred of the croft-next-door and those that dwelt thereon. Indeed, many Murray cailleachs—old women, that is to say, were given to shaking their fists at all and sundry, having forgotten that, once, only the Gunns stirred them to wrath.

This was a source of delight to Achanavig children. To anger the Murray cailleachs became a grand game. A bold youngster,

watched by admiring friends, would knock at the Murrays' door and ask for the cailleach. When she appeared, he had only to shout 'Gunn!' to enrage her. The group of children would race away screaming with laughter and a pleasant feeling of terror, pursued by the old woman's loud-voiced curses.

**B**Y some means the Murrays had acquired more of this world's goods than had the Gunns. They themselves believed they had done so by virtue of superior brain, greater industry, and as a reward from the Almighty for observing his commandments. The Gunns, on the other hand, attributed the Murrays' possession of greater wealth to greed, cunning, and to their being in league with the very Devil himself in all their doings.

Neil Gunn vowed that he used to see Old Nick prowling up and down the Murray croft of nights—taking care of his own, as it were—but folk guessed the apparition was only Callum Murray taking a look at his sheep. Who could deny but that Callum had a look of the Evil One, with his black eyes and eagle nose! It was, indeed, not surprising that he should scare the life out of Neil or any other God-fearing soul he met.

Somehow the Murrays were not popular. And though the Gunns were a good-for-nothing crowd, with red hair like the tinkers, they were better liked than were their neighbours.

The hardworking Murrays kept at least two cows, to be sure of having milk all the year round; when one was dry, the other had milk. But the idle, improvident Gunns never had more than one cow, and sometimes, when they were hard up, they cheerfully sold it. Many folk, however, had a soft side for them and gave them milk when they were without a cow.

It was the same with peats. Every year the Murrays had a stack at the end of their house that would have warmed a castle, but the Gunns never cut enough. Why should they bother cutting peats, murmured the Murrays bitterly, when there were plenty fools at hand ready to keep them supplied?

In like manner potatoes, eggs, and corn were the Gunns' without worry or labour. Some said the Gunns would have riled the Saints in Heaven, so was it any wonder they annoyed the Murrays. It seemed, indeed,

## THE ACHANAVIG FEUD

at this time—thirty years ago—that there would never be an end to this perpetual bickering.

**T**HEN things went from bad to worse. Neil and Callum found something new to row about—a slip of a girl called Peggy Allan. Neil took a fancy to her, and about the same time, just to be contrary, as likely as not, Callum did the same.

At first Peggy seemed to prefer Neil, and all Achanavig smiled. But when she changed her mind and turned to Callum folk shook their heads.

She then swithered from the one to the other half-a-dozen times and had everyone in a sweat. Then, in the midst of all the excitement, what did the besom do but go off and marry Dan Smith, who went round with the herring-cart. What was I telling you about the trouble a chit of a woman can cause!

**W**HAT now?" folk asked, and looked at each other uneasily. Was it not at such times as these that murder was done?

There were some who stopped going ceilidhing at nights. Who knew what might not happen? Might not a Gunn take a body for a Murray in the darkness and set on him? Might not a Murray slay him in temper? But weeks passed and no violent deed was done.

Then one night John Fergus staggered into the Smiths' house in a panic. He had seen a horrible sight he said—the Devil walking on arms with Neil Gunn, both singing *An T'Eilean Muileach* at the top of their voices.

It was obvious to the Smiths that John Fergus had had a dram too much, as was his habit. But to humour him they asked how he could tell it was Neil in the dark. Because it wasn't that dark, he had replied, and, besides, no one could sing worse than Neil Gunn—all out of tune he was.

And how did he know it was the Devil, they had then inquired. Man, John was surprised at their ignorance. Didn't everyone know the Devil when he saw him—someone the spit image of Callum Murray. And as it

couldn't be Callum it must have been the Devil.

The Smiths saw the force of this reasoning but still wondered what had come over John Fergus. They soon found out.

John had seen Neil Gunn all right, but it wasn't the Devil he had on his arm. It was no other than Callum Murray himself, as large as life, and no bonnier.

It seems that Callum had gone to the 'Loch and Stag' and was leaning over one end of the bar counter, looking full of gloom, when Neil came in calling for a drink and with the face on him of a man who'd never smile again.

Some poor innocent fellow, seeing the pair of them so dejected-looking, thought he would try to cheer them up. He passed a remark about fickle woman in general and Peggy Allan in particular.

The simple man meant well, and was totally unprepared for what followed. Callum and Neil rushed at him as if to see who would knock him down first. And when they had the unlucky fellow unconscious and the place upside down, some calling for a doctor and others for the police, and the host for order, away went Callum and Neil, arm-in-arm, as if they'd never been anything but the best of friends.

**T**HAT was how the feud ended years ago.

The schoolmaster went around saying that it went wi' a lass. And Achanavig agreed with him—without understanding what he was talking about.

So it came about that those who had been enemies for generations became fast friends. Callum even went the length of marrying Neil's sister, Morag—no beauty, any more than Callum himself, but a nice, jolly girl.

However, memories are long in Achanavig, for only last year I saw some children at their old game of baiting the Murray cailleach. The old woman flew into a wild rage, but, when the children had fled, her anger went too. 'I'm a grand hand at putting on the tempers!' she said, with a laugh.

She was none other than Neil's sister, Morag.

# Twice-Told Tales

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## XII.—The Poison-Eaters

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of December 1851. The article from which the extract below is taken was read by Madeleine Smith as a schoolgirl and was the first of four *Journal* articles on arsenic-eating which figured in her letters and in her defence in her celebrated trial for murder in 1857, when, accused of having poisoned her lover Pierre Émile L'Angelier by arsenic, she was discharged on a verdict of not proven. The other articles appeared in June 1853 and in February and July 1856.]

IN some districts of Lower Austria and in Styria, especially in those mountainous parts bordering on Hungary, there prevails the strange habit of eating arsenic. The peasantry in particular are given to it. They obtain it under the name of hedri from the travelling hucksters and gatherers of herbs, who, on their side, get it from the glass-blowers, or purchase it from the cow-doctors, quacks, or mountebanks.

The poison-eaters have a twofold aim in their dangerous enjoyment: one of which is to obtain a fresh, healthy appearance, and acquire a certain degree of *embonpoint*. On this account, therefore, gay village lads and lasses employ the dangerous agent, that they may become more attractive to each other; and it is really astonishing with what favourable results their endeavours are attended, for it is just the youthful poison-eaters that are, generally speaking, distinguished by a blooming complexion, and an appearance of exuberant health.

The second object the poison-eaters have in view is to make them, as they express it, 'better winded!'-that is, to make their respiration easier when ascending the mountains. Whenever they have far to go and to mount a considerable height, they take a minute morsel of arsenic and allow it gradually to dissolve. The effect is surprising; and they ascend with ease heights which otherwise they could climb only with distress to the chest.

The dose of arsenic with which the poison-eaters begin, consists, according to the confession of some of them, of a piece the size of a lentil, which in weight would be rather less than half a grain. To this quantity, which they take fasting several mornings in the week,

they confine themselves for a considerable time; and then gradually, and very carefully, they increase the dose according to the effect produced.

It is well to observe, that neither in these nor in other poison-eaters is there the least trace of an arsenic cachexy discernible; that the symptoms of a chronic arsenical poisoning never show themselves in individuals who adapt the dose to their constitution, even although that dose should be considerable. It is not less worthy of remark, however, that when, either from inability to obtain the acid, or from any other cause, the perilous indulgence is stopped, symptoms of illness are sure to appear, which have the closest resemblance to those produced by poisoning from arsenic. These symptoms consist principally in a feeling of general discomfort, attended by a perfect indifference to all surrounding persons and things, great personal anxiety, and various distressing sensations arising from the digestive organs, want of appetite, a constant feeling of the stomach being overloaded at early morning, an unusual degree of salivation, a burning from the pylorus to the throat, a cramp-like movement in the pharynx, pains in the stomach, and especially difficulty of breathing. For all these symptoms there is but one remedy—a return to the enjoyment of arsenic.

We trust arsenic-eating will never be added to the madnesses of our own country. Think of a man deliberately condemning himself to devour this horrible poison, on an increasing scale, during his whole life, with the certainty that if at any time, through accident, necessity, or other cause, he holds his hand, he must die the most agonising of all deaths!

## Considering the Best Apples

WHAT a lot of disappointment there has been in the past owing to ignorance. Take, for instance, the importance of insisting that the apple-tree one buys is grafted on the right stock. For the small garden, there is no doubt that most apple-trees should be planted on the Number IX stock. This ensures that the tree comes into fruiting early and never grows too large. Some may argue with me and say that in the case of the very weak-growing varieties it would be better to use the Number VII stock, and I think I would agree. Let us, however, be 'stock-conscious' and not just order the varieties needed without stipulating the numbered stock.

Having made certain about the stock, it is important to ensure the right facilities for pollination. There are varieties which are what are called self-sterile—that is to say, they cannot produce a satisfactory crop when they only have their own pollen to carry out the fertilisation. It is necessary, therefore, to plant a mate or mates so as to make certain that effective pollination takes place. For this reason, varieties which flower at the same time as one another should be included. Fuller details may be found in my *The A.B.C. of Fruit Growing*.

Before starting to deal with varieties, a plea must be put forward for effective spraying. Too often the winter tar-distillate washing is omitted, and then the eggs of large numbers of insect pests are not killed. This can easily mean a complete loss of crop. The apple-sucker, for example, may ruin the blossoms, the aphides may be devastating in their attack, caterpillars may eat up the early whorls of leaves and the flowers as well. Do not make the mistake, either, of overpruning. I have heard people say that they will go on cutting a fruit-tree harder and harder until it does bear. How foolish! A tree that is not pruned at all will come into cropping far quicker than a tree that is pruned hard.

Now to our varieties, and it is surprising how many different kinds of apples one can have if cordons are planted. The season could be started from the dessert point of

view by Owen Thomas or Laxton's Epicure; the latter is inclined to be soft, but then some people like the softer types of fruits. One would follow by Laxton's Favourite, which, I am told, is a seedling of Epicure, though some of the older readers might prefer the more old-fashioned variety, Langley Pippin, which is a weak-growing type but a good cropper, producing yellow fruits with a crimson flush and stripes.

I have forgotten to mention Melba or its delicious counterpart, Red Melba. If there is anything wrong with this variety it is that it is a biennial bearer, but it is quite delicious, and perhaps it is the earliest of all apples. Remember, however, that it does not keep long. The variety that follows this is Beauty of Bath, which had a bad name because the apples always seemed to drop before they were fully ripe. Yet, since the introduction of the hormone sprays the whole position has changed, because the trees can be thoroughly wetted as the apples are ripening and then they stick tight on the spurs for another three weeks, and can be picked as desired.

Following Langley Pippin, which we mentioned above, one could have James Grieve and then Fortune, which, incidentally, is a much better apple than Worcester Pearmain. Lord Lambourne comes in next, then, perhaps, Ellison's Orange, Cox's Orange Pippin, and I would include in the list Sunset and Tydeman's Orange. I should end the season with Winston, which in my experience is a very good keeper. You have to thin the apples when young or else they are apt to be too small. Laxton's Superb will eat quite well in January, Upton Pine in February, St Cecilia in March, The Duke of Devonshire in April, May Queen in, of course, May, and to end up your season you can have Easter Orange for the month of June. In this way you can have apples almost all the year round.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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## Science at Your Service

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### COLOUR-MATCHING

**A**N interesting item has recently emerged from commercial research. Our capacity to assess colours, and particularly to compare or match colours, is affected by body position. When we stand upright, both eyes see colours in the same way. But anyone lying down with the head in a sideways position will lose this colour-receiving balance. The eye that is in the lower position will become more sensitive to red and the upper eye more sensitive to blue. On the other hand, lying down on one's back will not unbalance the two eyes' colour-sensitivities. It is, of course, unlikely that an active person who has to compare colours or shades would do so in a reclining position, and to that extent this piece of information seems to have little practical significance. Bedridden or temporary invalids who take up needlework, however, may well find it most useful, for it should be simple enough in most cases for the two eyes to be levelled in position before a colour decision is made.

### A GARDEN HOEING-MACHINE

A new garden machine, closely resembling a small lawnmower in appearance and size, is claimed to solve the hoeing problem for light soils. A steel roller, 8 inches in diameter and 10 inches wide, is connected with a shaped blade. Above the blade is a spindle or rotor carrying 18 spring-loaded stainless-steel tines arranged like the spokes of a wheel. A V-belt turns the tine-spindle when the machine is pushed. The blade behind the roller passes through the soil and raises it to the level of the rotating tines, which then break up the soil and remove the weeds. A basket to collect the weeds is carried in a rear position, connected to the tubular steel handles by a slide-on bracket. The depth of hoeing is determined by the position in which the handles are held when pushing the machine. A curved cowling is fixed above the roller to prevent soil or small stones being thrown up to the danger or discomfort of the operator. The appliance weighs 25 pounds and is of all-steel construction.

### THE COW AT WORK

Scientists at the University of California have been time-studying the dairy-cow as a worker. One significant result that has emerged is that the cow grazes to persistent habit. She grazes for  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours per day, regardless of the actual amount of pasture consumed; 60 per cent of her grazing is by day and 40 per cent by night, and her rate of eating is between 50 and 70 bites per minute. She spends some 7 hours per day cud-chewing, and the total time spent lying down is 12 hours. While grazing, she travels about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles in daytime and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles at night. These are quite obstinate features of the normal dairy-cow's timetable. A poor pasture will not stimulate the cow to engage in overtime grazing. She will stop after  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours, whether fully satisfied or not. The implications of this research are considerable. A pasture field in which the grass is 5 inches high will provide nearly three times as much food in  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours grazing as a field in which the grasses are only 2 to 3 inches high. Also, a poor pasture is not likely to be made effective by underpopulating it with grazing cows; even though there may be enough food for the small number of cows grazing they are unlikely to co-operate by increasing their grazing hours or mileage per day. They will simply work to their fixed habits and the reduced intake of food will be reflected in a reduced output of milk.

### CAR RUNNING-BOARDS

Most of the maintenance effort devoted to keeping the ageing car on the road is directed towards its engine, but one structural part of a car that suffers from a high rate of deterioration is the running-board. It should be welcome news to many motorists that a British company is now manufacturing replacement running-boards. They are made from pressed-steel and are rubber-covered, and it is said that they can be easily fitted by unskilled labour. These new spare parts are being distributed through the normal garage and motor-repair trade.

## SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

### DRAINLESS SANITATION

A notable advance has been made in sanitation for premises without main drainage. Hygienic disposal is chemically controlled and no manual emptying operations are required. With the better of two models available, an electric-pump, operated either from the mains or from a car battery, raises chemically-sterilised fluid from the settling-tank under the floor into the cistern above the closet. This cistern can be push-button flushed in exactly the same way as modern low-level closet cisterns working on mains water-supply. The circulating pump is controlled by an automatic float-switch. The sterilising fluid, the cistern, and the settling-tank form a hygienic and closed system, but at regular intervals the odourless and bacterially inactivated contents in the settling-tank are drained off into a soak-away pit. The cheaper model is made of heavy-gauge corrosion-proofed aluminium. It has a much more utilitarian appearance. Further, it requires less site preparation and does not have a water flush, but the same antiseptic chemical is used. In appearance the electrically-controlled model is not in any way inferior to the standard type of main drainage closet.

### POTATO-HAULM PULVERISER

Awarded a Silver Medal at this year's Royal Agricultural Show, a new tractor-powered machine seems likely to simplify the cumbersome operation of potato-harvesting. It pulverises all weeds and haulms on the ridges before the tuber-lifting operation. Thus it dispenses with the need for spraying and obviates the common trouble of lifting machinery becoming clogged by surface vegetation. Tests have shown that when this new appliance is used the tonnage of potatoes actually lifted rises by from 5 to 10 per cent.—an appreciable reduction in operational waste. The blades of the machine are set at angles to follow the land contour; the rotor runs at 600 revolutions per minute. When a spinner is used, the chopped haulm quickly and completely disappears in the ground. Though the use of this appliance involves an additional pre-harvesting operation, it does not increase the total work for the potato crop. It eases the actual harvesting and there is subsequently no need to harrow the land, as the pulverised haulms and weeds compost in the soil much more speedily.

### A CALF SELF-FEEDER

In Canada and the U.S.A. the self-feeding bucket for calves is standard equipment on dairy or meat-raising farms. A British company is now offering this appliance. It is a simply-designed pail or bucket carrying a clamp for fixing it at natural feeding-height to a fence or post. At the bottom of the pail is a valve which allows the contents—milk, thin gruel, or water—to be evenly drawn through a rubber nipple. The valve has a valve action that prevents gulping. The pail has the usual carrying handle and is available in two models—a tinned model with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  gallons capacity and a seamless aluminium model with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  gallons capacity. The feeding mechanism is readily detached and re-assembled, so that all parts of the self-feeder can be quickly sterilised.

### CEDARWOOD HOUSE-TILES

House-tiles made from Canadian cedar-wood are again freely available after many years of control and restriction. A British firm is not only offering these tiles from stock, but can also undertake fixing contacts with expert workmen.

It is sometimes believed that wooden tiles will not withstand our climatic conditions, although they are predominantly used for roofing in the North American continent; however, in western Canada these tiles, known there as shingles, stand up to more prolonged rainfall and soaking than will be experienced in any part of Britain. Water-penetration tests carried out by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research have shown that the cedarwood shingle tile is twenty-one times more water-resistant than ordinary tiles. Canadian red cedarwood contains its own natural preservative and has so close-grained a structure that it is virtually immune to variations of humidity and temperature. One red-cedar tree was recently discovered half-buried in the ground and it was still sound timber though its age, as estimated from annual rings, was more than 4000 years.

One post-war advantage of this wooden tile is its light weight. The roof-supporting timber required may be reduced by about forty per cent; also, close boarding or felting will not be needed as the tiles form a perfect seal. Aesthetically considered, the red-cedar-wood tile is one of the most attractive roofing or facing tiles available. It weathers fairly

## CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

quickly—in six to eight months—to a silver-grey colour.

The fire-risk of a building is not increased by the incorporation of red-cedar tiles. Tests by the Building Research Station have established this, and fire insurance companies do not require extra premiums for this type of roofing.

Before the War the use of this kind of tile was not extensive in this country. Cedarwood roofing was sometimes seen on individual architect-designed houses and it may have been supposed that this type of roofing was a decorative luxury. As a matter of fact, the red-cedarwood shingle or tile to-day is much cheaper than the more usual slate or tile.

### SHOCK-COUNTER FOR PARCELS

There has never been any precise way of measuring the number or extent of blows or drops that a package receives during its transport by road or rail. Packaging materials have largely been developed by trial and error, a satisfactorily protective material or designed container being one that usually withstands the perils of transport. The British research association that specialises in packaging problems has now designed a shock-counter that can be enclosed within a parcel or container. Briefly, it is a flap that moves against a restraining spring whenever the parcel sustains a shock. Each shock is recorded on a counter. Various test packages will soon be making their 'Please Handle with Care' or 'Fragile' journeys with this automatic shock-recorder as the principal content, and it is hoped that its findings will throw a clearer light on the problems of package design and packing standards.

### A NYLON SIEVE

Nylon has already invaded so many traditional fields that its new use as a material for a kitchen sieve is less surprising than it would have been four or five years ago. The mesh of this sieve is entirely made from nylon fibres, the external drum being of beechwood. Sizes varying from 6 to 12 inches are available. The sieve is suitable for pulping cooked fruits and vegetables or for sieving such cooking materials as icing-sugar. The most obvious advantage of nylon fibres for this purpose is, of course, that they offer greater resistance than metal wires to corrosion by water or fruit acids.

### WIRE BASKETS AND CRATES

Two interesting developments in the container field have been introduced by a well-known wire company. The first has an essentially domestic appeal. It is a shopping-basket made of light-alloy wire. The handle is fitted with a rubber-covered grip and is collapsible, being formed by two arms that lie flat along the basket-top when in the folded position. Double-crimped wire is used. The appearance of these baskets is far from austere, as they are finished in a range of colours—red, blue, green, or gold. The baskets are light and strong, and a further advantage of some importance is that they can be easily washed.

The second development is more industrial. Briefly, it is a welded crate fabricated in standard mesh wire. Though in the open position the crate has normal shape and cubic size, when folded it occupies a flat position and space similar to that which would be occupied if the six sides of a wooden crate were laid one upon the other. Yet the wire crate is still in one piece when folded—that is to say, the six sides do not have to be handled separately and joined together when the folded position is converted into the open position of the actual crate. These single-piece foldable crates can be made to sizes and strengths required by factories or packing-centres. In view of the serious container problem now being faced by manufacturers and distributors this novel kind of container would seem to be well worth consideration. An incidental attraction of the welded crate is that it obviously possesses greater intrinsic value than the more conventional type of crate and, on account of this, it is far more likely to be cared for and returned by the customer receiving the packed goods.

To CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

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